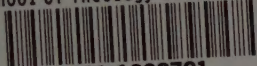


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THOUGHTS IN HIS PRESENCE

MEDITATIONS UPON THE
SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

WILFRED M. HOPKINS

INTRODUCTION BY THE REV. CANON
A. E. BARNES-LAWRENCE, M.A.



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THOUGHTS IN HIS PRESENCE

Meditations upon the Sacrament of
Holy Communion

Eucharist

BY THE REV.

WILFRED M. HOPKINS

AUTHOR OF "THE TABERNACLE AND ITS TEACHING"

WITH INTRODUCTION BY THE REV. CANON

A. E. BARNES-LAWRENCE, M.A.

"Ἐρχεσθε, ὅτι ἤδη ἑτοιμά ἐστι πάντα.

LUKE xiv. 17.

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INTRODUCTION

IN a recent discussion at Oxford upon Holy Communion, a graduate of Bukharest, addressing the present writer, said : " I understand the position of the Roman Church and of the Orthodox Church upon the Holy Communion, but I do not understand the position of your Church." He was quick to see a difference. The doctrine of the Church of England upon the Sacrament is indeed neither Roman nor Lutheran ; nor is it Zwinglian, as commonly understood. It claims to be wholly Scriptural, and submits itself to the test of the New Testament. That is precisely the position of the writer of this book and his claim upon our regard, and that claim is the greater because, in a day of much controversy upon the subject, his method is not in any way controversial, but devotional. His pages, like those of his earlier book on the Tabernacle, breathe a spirit of devotion to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and his one aim is the teaching and refreshment of His people. I feel sure that this purpose will be realized.

A. E. BARNES-LAWRENCE.

ST. MICHAEL'S,
BLACKHEATH, S.E.

PREFACE

THE following pages contain a series of seed-thoughts upon Holy Communion. There has been no attempt at elaboration ; the themes have not been worked out ; each idea, once suggested, has been left to the reader for amplification. The author has been impressed with the thought that there is much failure, on the part of many, to appreciate what is involved—of teaching, comfort, duty, and significance—in the Holy Feast. Men and women feel that they ought to “go to Communion,” and they say they “have been to Communion” ; but in many cases it is doubtful if they could give any intelligent account of what going to Communion involves, or have any clear idea of what they may expect to be the consequences, to themselves or others, of so doing. It is hoped that this unpretentious volume may prove a help to the realization of the privileges, the blessings, and the responsibilities, of participation in the Holy Sacrament.

The Meditations have been divided into sections in such a way that each section contains a complete thought in itself ; at the same time, all the sections in one Meditation stand related to the rest. Thus the book may be picked up at different times, and

one idea may be taken for concentrated thought at each Communion ; or it may be read through in the usual way. This plan will partly explain, and perhaps excuse, whatever of repetition there may be ; to complete one thought it is often necessary to refer to something which also belongs to another. Repetition, however, in itself is not to be wholly deprecated : “ precept upon precept, precept upon precept ; line upon line, line upon line,” has the highest sanction as a means of teaching.

As far as possible, all controversial points have been avoided in this work. The author has confessedly, and necessarily, written from the point of view of the Church of England, but he has endeavoured to deal only with fundamental truths, and that in such a way that all Believers, by whatever name they may be called, may join him in spirit, to their edification, at the Table of their common Lord.

To the Master's service he would dedicate the result ; may He be graciously pleased to accept and bless it, to use it for His glory, and for the comfort and enrichment of those into whose hands it shall come !

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“VÆ MIHI SI NON EVANGELIZAVERO”

THOUGHTS IN HIS PRESENCE

MEDITATIONS UPON THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

I

The Approach

WE are going to the Table of our Lord. Who can estimate the privilege involved and set forth in that simple statement? We, poor, wretched, sinful men and women, as we are in ourselves, are going—not into the ante-chamber, not into the judgment-hall, not merely into the throne-room, but to the Table of our Lord. Perhaps the first feeling is one of solemn expectation, mixed with an overwhelming sense of glad surprise. But this will be followed, surely, with a sense of deep and almost hopeless unworthiness. Is there not some mistake? We are not fit for a Presence so holy. An archangel might, perchance, venture to sit down at the Board of the Highest, in the lowest place—for he could aspire to no other—but we are so vile, so sin-stained, so imperfect, so utterly polluted with the things of earth and with the frailties of the flesh—no, the privilege and the honour cannot be for us. So men have felt, and perhaps rightly felt, in all ages, and

the feeling has kept many away from the Table of their Lord.

Lest it keep us also away, let us consider the terms of the invitation. "Come unto Me, all that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you." Very rightly has the Church of England incorporated that word of the Master into her Communion Office. Nor less wisely the declaration of S. Paul: "This is a true saying, and worthy of all men to be received, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." For we should fix it in our minds at once that our Lord's Table is the place, not for saints, *as such*, but for sinners who desire to become saints. No man, however sinful, need be, or ought to be, hindered from coming to Holy Communion by the consciousness of sin, however great. Do not let us be misunderstood. We would not, if we could—and we cannot—minimize the exceeding sinfulness of sin: it is a foul abomination, to be abhorred of all right-thinking men. It is a deadly leprosy, to be fled from as we would flee from any other plague, but with wilder horror and with greater earnestness of purpose. But, in itself, it is no barrier to our approach to the Table of our Lord. "Come unto Me, *all* that travail and are heavy laden"—such is the invitation of Divine Love, and we might as well be hindered from approaching Calvary because we are sinners as absent ourselves from the Feast. To do so is to turn our very title to come into a barrier to prevent our coming. For is He less a Saviour, is He less loving, is He less ready to welcome the returning prodigal, or to forgive the erring child, at His Table than He was on the Cross? Does His

nature, or His purpose, vary according to the place or the circumstances of our approach?

Let us seek for His own mind in the matter. What manner of men were they whom He gathered at the first Communion Board, when He instituted the great Commemorative Feast? Were they all specimens of sinless human perfection? Whether Judas was a partaker or not is a moot point—personally, we believe he was—but, allowing that he had already gone out, what about the rest? Were they “fit and proper persons” to remain? Take Peter alone; he will suffice for our argument—Peter, with his self-conceit; Peter, the potential coward; Peter, the man of potential profanity; Peter, with his utter lack of self-control—in what sense was Peter fit for Communion? Yet the Master included Peter when He said, “Drink ye *all* of this.” It is not the consciousness of sin that unfits a man for Holy Communion; it is the *unconsciousness* of sin. It is not sin that is the true barrier; it is lack of repentance, of self-loathing, of real desire and real purpose to be a sinner no more: these are the things that ought to keep men away, though, strangely enough, *they* often fail to do so.

For, after all, are we not all sinners? Is there one of us who is spotlessly holy in the sight of God? Shall we be all hindered, therefore, and leave the Table utterly unfurnished with guests? For what is the use of discussing “less” or “more” of sin when we are dealing with the Divine estimation? What is the use of babbling of our personal unfitness when we are every one unfit? May not our very humility turn into a kind of spiritual pride that

vaunts its self-negation, or degenerate into that deadly sin of rebellion, which is "as the sin of witchcraft," or into a stubbornness, which is as "iniquity and idolatry," in the sight of God?

There are many, we know, who have been hindered and frightened from the Table by those words of S. Paul addressed to the Corinthians: "Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. . . . For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" (1 Cor. xi. 27, 29). But the fear in their case is a wholly unnecessary one. For, apart from the fact that not "damnation," but "judgment," is the true translation of the original, the trouble has arisen from a confusion in their minds between an adverb and an adjective. The Apostle does not say, "He that eateth and drinketh being unworthy," but, "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily"; and the worthiness or unworthiness referred to is not in the receiver, but in the manner of the reception.

"Penitence, weeping and praying . . .

Breaketh Atonement's bread and drinketh Atonement's wine cup:

But he who cometh up hither "

carelessly, thoughtlessly, lightly, without repentance, charity, or faith; with no sense of the solemnity of the occasion; with no desire for the presence of the Holy One; "scoffing at men and at God, is guilty of Christ's blessed body." But so it cannot be with us: we are not worthy, we say, and the very sense

of our unworthiness precludes us from an unworthy reception of the Holy Mysteries.

“Not fit for Communion!” Of course we are not, nor ever shall be, this side the grave. “Sinners!” Of course we are sinners, but “this man [Christ Jesus] receiveth sinners and eateth with them.” We believed it when we were greater and more wilful sinners than we are to-day; we expect it to be true hereafter; for, sinners as we are, we hope to sit down at the final banquet in the Home above. Let us, then, believe that it is true to-day; let us believe that—

“All the fitness He requireth
Is to feel our need of Him”;

let us listen to the Church’s invitation—addressed, surely, not to seraphs nor to perfect saints, but to men and women like ourselves: “Ye that do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins, . . . and intend to lead a new life, . . . draw near with faith”; and let us come because He bids us come, and because, while our absence will grieve His loving heart, the truest and highest proof of our love for Him is that we should keep His commandments, of which almost the last was, “Do this in remembrance of Me.”

* * * * *

“Come unto *Me*” is the invitation; let us see to it that the thought abides in our hearts that we are going to the Table of our Lord, and that we are to meet Him there. We are going to *Him*; there is to be no deputed Master of the feast. Let us turn our eyes away from our own imperfections, and centre

our thoughts upon the meeting with our risen and glorified Lord. Just as we are, let us go into the Divine presence with true penitence, and humble hope, and childlike faith, and meek humility, in full assurance that, as we "make our humble confession" to Him, "meekly kneeling upon our knees," He will grant to us His absolution, and purge us from the things that make us unworthy of the Feast. It is a sad day for any man when he comes to an empty Table of his Lord, when his eyes are blinded with unbelief, or so dim with lack of spiritual vision that he does not expect to meet, or cannot see the Christ, in His real presence, at the Board. For it is that presence which hallows the Table and all that is thereon. We are going to "Holy Communion," but there can be no true communion with an absent Lord. There is no spiritual sustenance in the bread and wine if He be not there; we shall come away cold, unstimulated, unpurified, unblessed, if we see nothing but the symbols, and if the whole ceremony is to us nothing but a religious duty or an ecclesiastical ordinance—a Feast without a Host.

We are going to meet Him, and we are going, first of all, as His disciples, chosen by Him out of the world—not for our goodness, but in His love—to be lifted, it is true, into the higher relationship of friends, but first of all as His disciples, that we may sit at His feet, and that from His lips and from His example we may learn those lessons which shall fit us for a life of holy service, and enable us to follow Him whithersoever He shall lead us, though it be to new Calvarys of self-negation and death. We are going as into an upper room, nearer to heaven than

the level of our daily life, that we may be alone for a brief space with Him, and, in the hush of holy fellowship, may drink in of His spirit ; and, as we gaze upon that glorified and transfigured face, may be transformed into something of the same image, so that when we come down, as from the height of Mount Zion, men may take knowledge of us that we also have been with Christ.

* * * * *

We are going to the Table of our Lord—not to man's table or to the Church's table—and we are going at His invitation. Not because man invites us, not because the Church bids us, not because duty calls us, do we go. Any or all of these are, in themselves, motives insufficient and unworthy ; we must have a nobler sanction, a higher inspiration, a Diviner invitation, before we can approach a spot so sacred. For, once there, we must indeed put off our shoes from off our feet ; for we shall have entered through the rent veil into the Holy Place, and be in the very Tabernacle of the Most High, with Him who walks amid the Golden Candlesticks, to eat the Bread of the Presence, and to offer, as becometh those whom He has made Priests, our offerings of praise and prayer upon the Golden Altar, that they may rise up like incense, a sweet-smelling sacrifice well pleasing in His sight.

II

Commemoration

WHATEVER else Holy Communion may be—and we believe it to be much beside—it is first of all, and above all, a Commemorative Feast. It was so ordained, at the time of its institution, by Him who ordered it. “Take, eat,” He said, “this is My body, which is given for you : do this *in remembrance of Me.*” “Likewise after supper He took the cup,” and said to them, “Drink ye all of this . . . do this, as oft as ye shall drink it, *in remembrance of Me.*” Whatever other purposes, therefore, we may have in going to the Table of our Lord, our first and highest purpose must be remembrance of Him. Let us take care that this purpose does not get overlaid by other, and what to us may seem more important, views and aims in connection with the Eucharistic Feast. For, depend upon it, forgetting that, neglecting that, we shall fail, more or less, in all besides. Other blessings there may be, and are—as we hope to see ere all be done—to be obtained here ; but what hope have we, what hope can we have, of receiving them in their fulness if we begin their search by forgetting, or disobeying, our Lord’s command, and so setting aside, as a

matter of no memont, the declared purpose for which He has called us to His Board ? It were ungracious, to say the least of it, that we should relegate to any secondary place at His Table that which He, as Host, has elevated to the first. Let other blessings, other possibilities, other duties, wait ; first of all we will do what He has asked us to do. We shall not be hindered thereby—we shall lose no gift, we shall omit no duty, we shall miss no vision; all shall follow in due order if, to begin with, we obey His command and “do this in remembrance” of Him.

“Do this in remembrance of Me.” Has the strangeness of the command ever struck us ? Is He not here, at the Table, with us, not merely in some vague, ethereal, half-imaginary sense, but literally and truly with us, in a presence that is none the less real because it is unseen ? Not in the bread, of course, nor in the wine, not *alone* in the heart of the worthy receiver ;¹ for surely He is at His own Table, in His spiritual presence, always, and would be though every communicant were an unbeliever or a hypocrite—though they, of course, would not, and could not, experience or benefit by that presence. But if He be so present, why a commemoration of Him ? We commemorate those who are absent, we remember those from whom we are parted ; we need no commemoration of those who sit down with us at the same table. We do not remember them, we *see* them. So, surely, we are to see our Master at Communion ; with the eyes

¹ The term “worthy receiver” is used by the author throughout to indicate, not the person who is worthy to receive, but the person who receives worthily (see Chapter I).

of faith, it is true, but is vision less real because it is spiritual? Why, then, a commemoration? Why a command to remember? We believe the answer is to be found in the answer to yet another question—namely, *Whom* are we to remember? Are we to remember the risen Christ, the glorified Christ, the Christ with the “many crowns” of kingship on His brow? Surely not, and that for two reasons. First of all because, as we have seen, He is here, and so needs no remembrance; and, secondly, because the things by which we are bidden to remember Him do not set forth a living but a dead Christ, not a glorified but a crucified Redeemer. The cup is the emblem of the blood shed, the bread symbolizes the body broken; and broken body and shed blood speak to us, not of life, but of death; not of glory, but of shame (for death and shame are inseparable as regards humanity); not of power or of kingship, but of failure and humiliation. It is the crucified and not the risen Christ, the Christ of Gethsemane and of Calvary, not the Christ of the Father’s presence and of the sapphire throne, that we are bidden to remember when we gather here. Of course we know that they are, after all, but one Christ; yet so distinct are they, in their position and in their offices, that they must be brought to mind by different means—the one by personal communion and vision, the other commemoration and remembrance.

* * * * *

Can there be anything more appropriate or more blessed than that we should begin our Communion with a remembrance of the crucified Christ? For

the crucified Christ is the Saviour of sinners. We have come to our Communion with, it may be, a trembling sense of general unworthiness ; it may be

“ Crushed by the one large, deadly sense of sin ” ;

conscious in the one case of our weakness and our failure, or, in the other, burdened with the remorseful memory of some actual and wilful transgression, and wondering whether we ought to have come at all. There are no words that so appeal to us, in their truth, as the words of the confession, “ We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under Thy table ” ; we say of our sins, “ The remembrance of them is grievous unto us ; the burden of them is intolerable.” What more blessed, then, than that there should be brought to our recollection the crucified Christ, who “ bare our sins in His own body on the tree,” and that we should see the body broken for our transgressions and the blood shed for our iniquities ? Do not these sweet memorials assure us that, very sinners as we are, we are welcome—nay, that we are welcome because we are sinners, being invited to commemorate the sacrifice that was offered, not only “ for the sins of the whole world,” but for ours ?

Moreover, we are depressed sometimes as we make “ our humble confession to Almighty God ” by the thought that we have made the same confession, not once merely, but many times before. We acknowledge ourselves to be frail, and erring, and sinful in the very same terms, and with the same unhappy truth, as on many a previous occasion. Can we hope that there will be a sufficiency of

Divine patience to overlook these repeated shortcomings? Will a just and holy God continue to pardon the offences of those who do not learn to abstain from the evils they profess to deplore? Lo! yet once again before us are displayed the symbols of our perfected redemption, and once again we are bidden to commemorate Him who, by "His one oblation of Himself, once offered," made "a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world"; and the very presence of those emblems, and the very invitation to that commemoration, should assure our hearts that He is a God "whose property is always to have mercy," and we should learn to "draw near with faith," pleading the Sacrifice and receiving the Elements at once as tokens and pledges of our forgiveness and our acceptance at the hands of the Divine. "Come unto Me, all that travail, and are heavy laden"; "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father . . . and He is the propitiation for our sins"!

" We hear the words of love ;
We gaze upon the blood ;
We see the mighty sacrifice ;
And we have peace with God."

But this commemoration is, perhaps, necessary also that we may not fail to remember that that peace depends, and depends alone, upon the broken body and the shed blood. We need, it may be, to be constantly reminded that, as sinners, we have no plea for pardon and acceptance save the sacrifice of Christ. The Evil One is ever striving to draw

off our minds from Calvary and to induce us to put our trust in secondary causes of assurance. To this temptation human nature is peculiarly susceptible, and never more so than when it finds joy and satisfaction in the duties and exercises of a truly religious life. Not only our own spiritual pride, but the very ordinances of worship, may prove snares to us, and loom so large in our mental and spiritual vision that we may become deceived and mistake them for the sources of our salvation and the foundations of our peace. The better men and women we grow the more liable we are to fall into this mistake—a mistake than which there is none more deadly, for it displaces the Cross, and substitutes for it some personal piety or some ritual observance, and so dishonours Christ, and destroys that faith in the one and only Sacrifice which alone is the ground of all true Christian hope.

* * * * *

“Do this in remembrance of Me.” Is there not something almost pathetic in this request? Do we not seem to hear in it the longing of the human heart of Jesus for an assured abiding-place in the heart of each of His disciples? The circumstances under which the words were spoken were sorrowful and touching in the extreme. They were partaking of the last meal together before the awful parting, which He so clearly foresaw, even if they did not. Moreover, He knew that, to all intents and purposes, their earthly association and intimacy was over; the day was not far distant when “the envious cloud” would receive Him out of their sight, and their eyes would see Him no more. How would their friend-

ship bear the strain of His condemnation and crucifixion? How long would He retain the place He now occupied in their affections when they saw Him no longer? Do not let us conceive of Christ as though He were incapable of such questionings as these. Do not let us think of Him as a Stoic, or lose sight of the humanity in our contemplation of the deity of our Lord. And do not let us imagine that He is beyond such feelings now; He is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever"; and surely that human heart of Jesus of Nazareth longs to-day, as in the Paschal hour of old, that His disciples, whom He loves, should bear Him, with grateful and tender recollection, in their hearts. So let us remember not only His sacrifice and all it means to us, but *Him*—His deep affection for us; His unceasing care for our welfare; all that He bore and suffered for us upon earth; all that He is doing for us in heaven; all the love, manifested in His humiliation and His crucifixion, and manifested not less in His mediatorial work, and in the patience with which He has borne our frailties and our shortcomings since we first declared ourselves His disciples and promised "to serve Him to the end." For it is just this kind of remembrance which is at once the life-blood and the measure of true Christianity. To be a Christian, indeed, is to love; not to love an abstraction, or a system, but a person. "The first and greatest commandment" is, "Thou shalt love"; and all our religion will be but a delusion and a snare if we fail to love Him whose service it is, with the warm devotion of adoring hearts. He has called us to be His friends, but there is no

such thing as friendship without love, and there is no such thing as love without remembrance ; and no historic Christ, dim and vague and shadowy—the object of a mere ecclesiastical attachment—can ever evoke in a human heart any sentiment worthy the name of love, or prove strong enough to bind a man in willing bond-service such as our relationship to Christ demands. Only the consciousness of a personality will awake and foster our affection ; and it may well be that to stimulate that consciousness was one of the purposes for which He bade us “ do this in remembrance of Me.” It may be argued that such a consciousness would be fostered by our communion with the spiritual and present Christ. True ! But we are so constituted that we are best introduced to communion with the spiritual Christ by our contemplation and recollection of Jesus of Nazareth as He was when He was upon earth.

* * * * *

But surely this commemoration is not only for our sakes, but for the sake of the world ; not only for recollection, but also for proclamation. “ For,” says the Apostle, “ as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show forth the Lord’s death till He come.” There are two facts of which the world needs constant reminder : the one is the fact of sin, the other is the fact of redemption through a crucified Christ. To the latter we bear witness every time we gather at the Table of our Lord. “ Ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord,” and among all the subjects of our testimony there is none more urgent and more important than this, absolutely none. For the world, under the Devil’s impulse,

is ever seeking to forget or to deny this foundation truth of our holy religion. The offence of the Cross has by no means ceased, but grows ever greater as the ages roll by. Man, in his vain conceit and in his fancied intellectual superiority, is ever ready to pour scorn upon the doctrines of a substitutional Atonement ; he no longer desires to rob humanity of the historic Jesus—nay, he will admit Him to have been, *in a sense*, a Saviour of the world ; but you must be benighted indeed, in his estimation, if you believe that He offered a sacrifice for sin upon Calvary's Cross. Nay, more, in his opinion, not only was such a sacrifice quite impossible, it was wholly unnecessary. Are we not equally divine, and may we not save ourselves by our own self-culture and improvement from all the “ imperfections and infirmities ” that have by some means laid hold upon our race ? What need, then, of a Saviour ? Surely none. Magnify the holiness, the purity, the philanthropy, the wisdom, the patience, the unselfishness of Jesus as much as you will ; admit that He died either as a pattern or as a martyr—it does not signify which ; strive all you can to imitate His virtues ; but, for pity's sake, do not be so childish, so deplorably ignorant and unscientific as to imagine that He could have shed His blood on your behalf, or that, if He had done so, it could have, or would have, made the slightest impression in your favour on the mind of God.

Against this ever-prevailing and ever-growing error we are witnesses (not to each other, but to the world) at the Holy Feast. The world knows nothing, can know nothing, of our communion with a risen

Lord Who is present in spirit with His worshippers ; but it does know that we gather there to partake of the symbols of the broken body and the shed blood. It knows that we do so because we believe in a crucified Christ, and in the salvation which has been provided for us by His death. The value of such a continual witness cannot be over-estimated ; it is not merely a perpetual witness to our own faith, it is a standing protest against the unbelief of others. Were it not for this the world might say that the doctrine of the Cross was no longer a part of the Christian creed, or that it no longer commanded the assent of Christians ; that it was but a dead filament, a lifeless excrescence upon our religion, that ought to be removed. But such an expression of opinion is impossible in the face of multitudes of men and women gathering, week by week, to partake of the sacred symbols of their Master's death. Here, then, is one of the strongest reasons for our regular and frequent attendance at the Holy Table. In view of this fact there lies upon us a double guilt if we neglect to be present at Communion : there is not only the guilt of disobedience to our Lord's dying command, there is also the failure to bear our testimony to the truth of salvation through His death—a failure which may very easily help to weaken our brother's faith therein, and so lay us open to the danger of bloodguiltiness in the sight of God. Love and loyalty, therefore, require and demand our presence. And yet how many stay away altogether, or come but seldom to the Feast ! “ Do this,” said Christ ; yet they do it not. They do not join in the great Commemoration ; they do not show forth the Lord's

death. Why, we know not. It is not ours to judge them. Be it ours to take care that we fall not into the same unhappy ways ; to do so is to neglect our duty and to grieve our Lord. That we shall miss untold blessings for ourselves by so doing is but a small matter compared with such considerations as these.

“ Wherefore we come, Thy gentle call obeying,” not lightly, not thoughtlessly, not in a spirit of mere formal obedience, not without a sense of our deep unworthiness ; but with full purpose of heart that longs for greater holiness of thought and life, with unfeigned faith that trusts in the all-sufficient merits of Thine Atonement, with Bethlehem, and Gethsemane, and Calvary mirrored in the vision of our minds and graven on the tablets of our hearts we come. And we come to do Thy bidding ; we will fulfill all Thy will concerning us—

“ According to Thy gracious word,
In meek humility,
This will we do, our dying Lord,
We will remember Thee.”

III

Communion

KOINŌNIA, which we translate "communion," comes from a Greek root, and signifies "to communicate, to impart, to make a sharer in, to take counsel, to hold communion, to have intercourse with." We may, perhaps, find it convenient to sum up these meanings in two words—"partnership" and "fellowship"—*i.e.*, the act of sharing and the holding of intercourse. Both of these are to be realized as we come to the Holy Table: we are to have intercourse with our Lord, and we are to be partakers, not only of Him, but with Him.

Let us think of partnership first. We are to be partners with Him. There is to be a community of thought, of feeling, and of possessions, between the believer and the Divine. We say between the believer "and the Divine" because, although we naturally think more of the Son when we come to the Lord's Table, yet we must never forget that we come to meet, not only the Son, but all the Persons of the Blessed Trinity; and "Truly our fellowship (Gr. *koinōnia*) is with the Father,"¹ as well as with the Son. "All things are yours," says S. Paul,

¹ I John i. 3.

“ whether . . . the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come ; all are yours ; and ye are Christ’s ; and Christ is God’s ” (1 Cor. iii. 22, 23). And again : “ If children, then heirs ; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ ” (Rom. viii. 17). And it is written in another place : “ Son, thou art ever with me, *and all that I have is thine* ” (Luke xv. 31). We may, however, we think, confine ourselves with profit to the thought of our communion (both in the sense of partnership and of fellowship) with our risen Lord.

How marvellous a thought, that we who hold true communion with Christ are joint-heirs with Him in the fullest and utmost meaning of the term : that whatsoever is His is also ours—“ All things are yours ” ! The words open up to our minds such tracts of infinite wealth and possibility that our brain almost reels, and our faith almost staggers, and we seem, for the moment, like men that dream. It cannot, surely, be true. To begin with, can we be partners with Him in His Divinity ? Yea, verily : “ According as His Divine power hath given unto us all things . . . that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature ” (2 Pet. i. 3, 4). And if of that, why not of all beside ? If the Father has made us Divine by the gift of His Son, “ shall He not with Him also freely give us all things ? ” That we have not yet come into our heritage ; that we are still so often almost bankrupt, not only in the lower, but also in the higher forms of wealth, is due, doubtless, to the palsied hand of unbelief, which prevents us from grasping the inheritance to which our Divine relationship entitles us ; is due

also, perhaps, to the Divine Vision of our unfitness to be trusted with them in their fulness ; but none the less is this the spot where we may fittingly meditate upon the truth and the reality of that partnership which makes us co-heirs with Christ of all the riches of God.

* * * * *

Partnership with Him—let us glance at some of its constituent parts. And, first of all, there must be partnership with the *human* Christ ; for we are brought into communion with Him by partaking of death—that death of which the Elements before us are the symbols. As He died for us, so must we die in Him ; as He died for sin, so must we die to sin ; as He died for the world, so must we die to the world ; we can never share His resurrection life, with all that it includes and implies, until we have become partakers of His death. Death, to the Christian, is ever the gate of life. Many men shrink from this truth ; they would fain have all the joys, all the peace, and all the advantages of communion, but they do not desire to make the initial and indispensable sacrifice ; they would fain live at once to God and to sin, or, at least, to God and to themselves. Such a course is, however, impossible, and it behoves us to ask ourselves, here and now, whether this initial sacrifice has been made. Do we reckon ourselves “ dead indeed unto sin ” ? Are we being “ crucified unto the world ” ? Is the world being crucified unto us ? No mere formal and outward conformity to sacramental observances will avail us here : the partnership cannot be produced *ex opera operata* ; there must be a vital union between our

Lord and ourselves, and the one and only means to such a union is that we should journey with Him to Calvary and become partakers of His death.

But there is to be not only partnership in death ; there is to be partnership in life. We are to be “planted together,” not only “in the likeness of His death,” but “also in the likeness of His resurrection.” Nay, more, we are not only to be planted together, we are to be *one with* Him, for we are to partake of the living as well as of the dead Christ ; the participation is not merely to be symbolic, it is to be spiritual reality ; we are to feed upon the living Christ, and so become actual partakers of His resurrection life, in order that He may become—not in mere poetic expression, but of very deed and truth—“Christ in us, the hope of glory.” Here is the secret of true partnership ; we become one with Him, and, as a necessary consequence, all that He possesses becomes ours. “All that He possesses becomes ours”—let us say it again, and strive to grasp some, at least, of its meaning ! His peace, His power, His strength, His victory ; all “the riches of His grace,” all “the riches of His glory,” all the fruits of His passion, all the present possibilities of the Divine Sonship, all “the inheritance of the saints in light,” are henceforth ours, because we are Christ’s and Christ is God’s. Nor are they ours in theory alone or by a legal fiction : “communion” (*koinōnia*) signifies to impart, to share in ; and He is willing to impart, and it is our glorious privilege to share in all these things by virtue of our partnership with Him. Alas ! how little we realize that privilege ! How little we obtain of all the

wealth that might be, and ought to be, ours ! In what a state of moral and spiritual poverty—one might almost say bankruptcy—we are content to live, or at any rate do live. What lives of weakness, of defeat, of sadness, of failure ! What a spectacle to angels and men ! What a miserable commentary upon our boasted relationship to an almighty Father of love ! What a burden to ourselves ! What a perplexity to others ! Here, as we bow in reverent homage before Him whom our soul loveth ; here, in the hush of calm and holy fellowship with our Elder Brother, who is also our Master and our Lord, let us strive to estimate afresh our privileges, and to ask ourselves why we have so often failed to experience their power in our hearts and lives. Why are we so often downcast if His joy is ours ? Why are we so often and so hopelessly defeated by the powers of evil if we are partakers of His victory ? Why is our spiritual life so feeble, why are we such spiritual invalids, if His strength is at our disposal ? If His glory be part of our heritage, why does not more of it shine upon our brow ? Why are we poor—not in this world's goods, but in the wealth of heaven—if we are joint-heirs with Christ of all the riches of the grace and the glory of God ? “ My brethren, these things ought not so to be.” That they are so is due to our failure to appropriate the wealth that is at our disposal ; or is it due to the presence of some known and cherished sin in our hearts and lives ? In either case this is the place of all places, this is the hour of all hours, for us to acknowledge our folly, our shortcoming, our sin, and to pray for grace and strength that we may be

enabled to enter more fully into our heritage. Christ is here in very deed ; let us put forth the trembling hands of faith and prayer, and ask that He would fill them—as, indeed, He is waiting to do—with His “ manifold gifts of grace.” Nay, rather, let us pray that He would fill us in more abundant measure with Himself ; for we shall infallibly lose the gifts if we carry them from His Presence, but we shall be rich and safe indeed if, as we go out, we take with us, not the gifts alone, but the abiding Presence of the Giver Himself.

* * * * *

Is there not yet another phase of this partnership which we are apt to overlook ? We are to enter, surely, into the fellowship of His sufferings. This is not a repetition of our previous thought ; we are not now referring to the partaking of His death, but to our participation in that which the Holy Ghost describes as “ the travail of His soul.” This travail, let us remember, is the burning desire of His heart for the salvation of men. It was this travail which induced Him to leave the sapphire throne and the Father’s bosom ; to descend to our sin-stained earth ; to live the life of poverty and woe ; and to die the malefactor’s death. It was because of this that He “ endured the Cross, despising the shame ” ; it is for the satisfaction of this travail of soul that He waits and pleads at His Father’s right hand in heaven. Of the intensity of that travail we can have but the faintest conception, nor can we measure it, save by the immensity of the sacrifice it induced Him to make, and the depth of degradation it enabled Him to bear. Is it conceivable,

therefore, that we are to be partakers with Him in all His grace and glory, but that we are not to partake of the dearest desire of His heart? The emblems set forth before us are the emblems of the world's salvation, of the sacrifice by which that salvation is to be accomplished; is that salvation to be a matter of no concern to us, save as it relates to ourselves? We sometimes meet with professing Christians who are indifferent or even hostile to Missions; how can they gather together at the Table of their Lord, and enter into true partnership with Him whose one object in the sacrifice of which they there partake was the deliverance, not of us alone, but of all mankind, from the thralldom and from the consequences of sin? Let us deal faithfully with ourselves as regards our attitude to this question. There can be no perfect unity between two persons if it does not extend to the subject which stands first in the estimation of one of them; we cannot have perfect communion with our Lord if we are indifferent to that which He esteems as the greatest object of His being. Do not let us deceive ourselves with any pious platitudes; if we are to be co-heirs with Him, and to enter upon our heritage, we must be satisfied with no languid assent to the scheme of man's redemption; we must have a real passion for souls; we must—in a faint measure, it is true, as compared with Him—we must know something of that agony of longing for men's salvation which the Bible calls "the travail of His soul." This is not the place for selfishness: the spirit that would wrap itself in the mantle of its warm self-love, and be content to "sit and sing itself away to

everlasting bliss," while other men and women were going to perdition in their millions, will find no welcome and no encouragement here. This is the feast of love—not merely of our Lord's love for us, but also of our love for Him. But how can we love Him if we love not those for whom He gave Himself as a Burnt-Offering and a Sin-Offerin; how can we love Him if we love not those whom He loves with all the love of His Divine and tender heart? We say, then, let us ask ourselves: Have we felt, do we feel, this passion for souls? If not, let us pray that He would, this moment, so pour His love into our hearts that it may burst forth in a blaze of holy charity, which shall yearn for the rescue of the perishing, and mourn with bitterness, and as with a sense of personal loss, over the thousands of His sheep that are still astray upon the mountains of sin and death.

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And now let us turn our thoughts to the second division of our subject. "Communion" means not only partnership, but also fellowship "*Koinōnia*" signifies, as we saw, "to take counsel, to consult, to have intercourse with." There is to be personal intercourse between ourselves and Christ. The worthy receiver is not only to be conscious of the living Presence of his living Lord, he is to have direct and personal communication with Him. How much better in this respect is our position than that of the heathen worshipper! The man who calls upon Baal, or Vishnu, or Bhudda, flings his prayer into illimitable space, in the hope that it may reach the deity to whom it is addressed, but with what success he know not; he comes away from his devo-

tions unsatisfied, for "there was no voice, nor any that answered," nor has he any assurance that there was "any that regarded." Nay, how much better off are we, under the New Dispensation, than were the majority of the worshippers of JEHOVAH Himself under the Old! They might bring their offerings into the outer court of the tabernacle or the temple; they might be assured by priest or by prophet that their prayers were heard and their persons accepted, but they could come no closer; they could hear no voice; they could not, dared not, hope to hold any personal communication with the God they worshipped. Not so with us. We are separated by no veil from the immediate Presence; we are exiled in no outer court; we are invited to the very *Table* of our Lord; and that invitation, and that nearness of approach, both signify and include the privilege of personal and present communion in the sense of intercourse with Him. Do not let us forget, in this connection, that intercourse is a mutual thing: it is not merely prayer, for that is one-sided: it is the expression of mind to mind—the mutual interchange of word and thought and feeling between two persons—and, as a rule, suggests more or less of equality between those who hold it. This is a phase of the Christian relationship which many persons overlook. They appreciate, and avail themselves of, the privilege of prayer; they present their petition at the mercy-seat; they ask for blessing, for wisdom, for counsel, for guidance, for assurance; but they do not wait for an answer to their prayers—that is to come later. They go out to their duty or their pleasure more or less soothed and satisfied by

the holy exercise, but they cannot be said to have had communion with God. They did not wait for any—did not imagine, perhaps, that any was possible ; they said all they had to say to Him, but they did not stay to “ hearken what the LORD God would say,” not only concerning them, but *to* them. This we believe to be a serious mistake. We believe that there is still a living voice, “ inbreathed to thought,” which the believer may hear, which once heard will never be forgotten or mistaken, and which will speak messages of priceless worth to those who will have the faith and leisure to listen to its tones. Of this sacred intercourse Holy Communion is surely the emblem, as it is one of the highest opportunities. For was there not such intercourse between our blessed Lord and His disciples at the Primary and, as we think, the Pattern Feast ? Did He not, after supper, hold high converse with them—they with Him ? And was it not on terms of familiarity, not to say equality ? “ Henceforth I call you not servants ; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth : but I have called you friends ; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you.” “ The time cometh when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs.” “ I have yet many things to say unto you ” (John xv. 15 ; xvi. 25, 12). What is all this but present intercourse and promise of intercourse to come ? May we not expect that He who thus held converse with His disciples at the first Communion Table will also hold converse with us, their successors, in these later days ?

Personal converse with the Master ! What untold possibilities the thought contains ! Not only to tell

Him everything—to lay bare before His gracious eyes all our hopes and fears, all our joys and sorrows, all our successes and our failures, all our necessities, our perplexities, our possibilities—not only to pray for help and grace and guidance, but to hear His tender voice answering us, to receive counsel from Him—nay, to take counsel *with* Him—to be let into the secret of His purposes, to consult with Him as to those things in life which have perplexed and troubled us, to hold free intercourse upon terms of friendship with our risen Lord! Who can estimate the strength, the comfort, the wisdom, the glory, that such intercourse affords? How many failures, how many mistakes, how many hours of depression—nay, how many days of sin—should we escape if we but availed ourselves of the opportunities which such a privilege places within our reach!

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These, then, are some of the things which *koinōnia* signifies, which the feast of Holy Communion at once includes and typifies. We say “includes and typifies,” for we should ever remember that whatsoever we do, whatsoever we receive, whatsoever we ought to be, at the Table, that we are to do, receive, and be—in different degrees—each day, and all the days, of our life. Our experiences there are not to be something apart from the common experiences of our Christian life. True, it is to be to us as a Hermon height, where the vision of Christ is clearer, where the world is less insistent, where the cares and the temptations of life press less heavily, and where, as a consequence, we are more at leisure for holy fellowship, for worship, for refreshment; it is to be

the place where all the truths, and all the glories, and all the possibilities of our holy religion are, as it were, gathered up and set forth in the rare atmosphere of the mountain-top, that we may see them more clearly and enjoy them, for a brief while, more intensely. But it is not intended that we should enjoy them there alone. We are not to go down from the mount, we are not to depart from the feast, content to wait until we meet there again for any further manifestation of our Lord, for any further communication with, or participation in, Him. These hours of Holy Communion are to be opportunities, it is true, for these things, perhaps opportunities for their highest and fullest enjoyment ; but they are to be more : they are to be symbolic feasts, setting forth in clearest outline the possibilities—nay, the very necessities—of all true Christian life.

“ Too soon we rise ; the symbols disappear ” ; but the things symbolized remain. We are not less saved by the death of Christ that the bread and wine no longer bear witness to the broken body and the shed blood ; we feed no less upon Him because we partake no longer of the Sacred Elements ; He is still our life, though we do not behold the visible evidences of our spiritual sustenance ; and the partnership, and the fellowship, is to be the same, in the home or in the market-place, as it was at the Table of our Lord.

IV

Sacrament

“ **W**HAT meanest thou by this word ‘ Sacrament ’ ?

“ I mean an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us, ordained by Christ Himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof.” Such is the definition of a Sacrament by the Church Catechism—a definition which is all-sufficient for the purpose, and to which we shall return presently. But, first of all, we desire to look a little closer and a little deeper, and to consider, not the ecclesiastical, but the real and original meaning of the term.

Sacramentum, from which we derive our word “ Sacrament,” was the Latin name for “ the engagement entered into by newly enlisted soldiers, for the military oath of allegiance, and, generally, for an oath.” That it was applied, with something of the same significance, to the Lord’s Supper in the early days of the Christian Church is evident from the letter of the younger Pliny to the Emperor Trajan, in which he speaks of the Christians as “ meeting on a certain day (the Lord’s Day), and

binding themselves by a ' sacrament ' to commit no wickedness, but to lead good lives."¹ Neither the term nor the idea can be said to be Scriptural, it must be confessed ; but there is a fitness in the name, and a deep truth in the significance of that name as applied to Holy Communion, upon which we shall do well to meditate.

To what extent has the thought been present to our minds, as we approached the Holy Table, that our coming involved solemn responsibilities as well as glorious privilege ? To what extent have we remembered that it was the Table of our Lord, our Master, our King, no less than that of our Saviour and our Friend ? How far have we realized that we were approaching it, not only as suppliants, but as disciples ; not merely as followers, but as soldiers and servants of the Christ ? For the fact that, in His loving condescension, He is pleased to regard us as friends in no wise sets us free from the responsibilities and duties which are involved in our relation to Him of bond-servants, bought with His precious blood, of soldiers enlisted beneath the banner of the Cross. And so we come to take our oath of allegiance—nay, by our very coming we *do* take such an oath, whether we come for that pur-

¹ " Adfirmabant autem, hanc fuisse summam vel culpæ, vel erroris, quod essent soliti, stato die, ante lucem convenire, carmenque Christo quasi Deo dicere secum invicem : seque sacramento non in scelus aliquod obstringere, sed ne furta, ne latrocinia, ne adulteria, committerent, ne fidem fallerent, ne depositum appellati abnegarent : quibus peractis morem sibi discendendi fuisse, rursusque cœundi ad capiendum cibum, promiscuum tamen at innoxium."—Pliny, Epist. xcvi., lib. x., p. 819. Ed. Amstel.

pose or not, whether we are prepared or unprepared to keep it. By coming we profess ourselves to be His ; and the profession, so made, binds us by the most solemn obligation to that life of service which is not only a service but a warfare. We are bound, because we come, to be loyal ; and loyalty in this case can only exist while we continue to be " good soldiers of Jesus Christ."

Loyalty and military service ! The world is watching us, does it see the one ? The forces of hell are opposing themselves to the kingdom " of our Lord and of His Christ," do they suffer the consequences of the other ? We are making our public confession of allegiance to Christ and of our adherence to the Christian religion, and though the world will not be here, yet, as we have said already, it is conversant with the fact. Nor is it ignorant, however little it may be disposed to obey them, of the laws which should henceforth govern our lives. It will watch us, whether we are conscious of the fact or no, with keen and tireless observation to see if our professions and our conduct agree ; and if not, it will lay the blame—not so much at our door, where it is due—as at the door of that religion which we misrepresent. It will sneer, not so much at Christians, as at Christianity ; it will doubt, not only our sincerity (that would be a small matter comparatively), but the power of Christ to save men and women from the dominion of sin ; it will say, what it has so often said before, " If that is your Christianity, I can be as good, and better, without it." It were more desirable, surely, that we did not take the oath at all than that we should fail to keep it

once taken. The greatest foe to the spread of the Kingdom of Heaven is not the atheist or the worldling, but the man who makes a public profession of religion, and, by his life, gives the lie to the truths which he has professed.

Nor can we forget our Master in such a connection as this. We are pledging our loyalty to *Him*. With what wistful, longing eyes will He not watch us to see how our promises will be kept ; with what sorrow of heart will He not mark our failure to live out the life that shall be in accordance with the vows which our actions, if not our lips, have made. Can we contemplate that sorrow with composure, can we bear with indifference to see

“ . . . that pitying look,
That kind, upbraiding glance, which broke
Unfaithful Peter's heart ” ?

Can we endure the thought that we have failed Him, that He is disappointed in us, that we have hindered rather than helped the accomplishment of the purposes upon which His heart is set ? Surely not, without the keenest pain, if we love Him as we ought.

It behoves us, therefore, to live such lives as shall be consistent with our oath of allegiance ; to avoid those things which are contrary to the same ; to display such tempers as accord with the spirit of the Master, “ whose we are and whom we serve.” It behoves us in all things to fashion our lives according to the laws of the kingdom of which we have become voluntary members ; to be good citizens of that Heavenly City of which we declare ourselves freemen, and which we profess to be seeking when

we come to the Table of our Lord. And this, not so much for our own sake, as for the sake of our King, and of those who have not yet acknowledged His sceptre or yielded themselves to His dominion.

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But further, as we saw, there is not only to be Loyalty, there is to be military service ; we are not merely to be good citizens and good subjects, we are to be “ good *soldiers* of Jesus Christ.” Nor are we to be soldiers only for some holiday review ; we are to buckle on the armour and go out to fight against the allied forces of the world, the flesh, and the Devil. Passive Christianity is much too common amongst us ; there are far too many men and women in our churches who are content with *being* ; there are far too few who realize the necessity for *doing*. We do not mean, of course, the necessity for doing as a means of their own salvation. To the question, “ What must I do to be saved ? ” the answer is emphatically :

“ Nothing, either great or small ;
Nothing, sinner, no :
Jesus did it all, did it all,
Long, long ago.”

But a very different answer is required to the question, “ What, when I *am* saved, ought I to do for the honour of my Lord, and for the establishment of His kingdom among the sons of men ? ” We are saved by the shed blood, and by that alone, and the means whereby we attain that salvation is not effort, but faith. But to be saved is not the end of our salvation, it is only a means to an end ; we are

saved that we may serve, and the service includes an active and constant strife with the enemies of our Master and our King. We are to oppose ourselves—all our time, all our talents, all our possessions, all our faculties are to be pressed into the service as far as may be—we are to oppose ourselves to each and every form of evil that stains the earth and works the destruction of mankind. By gift, by word, by deed, we are to seek to promulgate the laws of the Kingdom of Heaven, and to defeat the forces which are working in opposition to the perfect establishment of that kingdom upon the earth. No self-love, no fear of personal loss, no desire for ease, no hope of earthly gain, no consideration for our reputation among men, no dread of scorn, or ostracism, or misunderstanding, or contempt, must cause us to swerve from the path of duty or to make a truce with sin. We must, like John the Baptist, “constantly speak the truth, boldly rebuke vice, and patiently suffer,” if suffering arises as a consequence of our so doing ; we must seek to “loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free” ; we must enter our strongest protest against every form of injustice, of tyranny, of impurity, of dishonesty ; we must disassociate ourselves from everybody and from everything that refuses to be governed by the laws of righteousness and love. And this not intermittently, but always—at whatever cost and with whatever pain the duty may entail. To this, and to no less than this, we bind ourselves in solemn covenant when we come to the Holy Table and take the *Sacramentum*, the oath of loyalty and of military allegiance to our

King. Would that all Christian men and women realized these truths and sought to fulfil their responsibilities in these respects! How utterly different the earth would by this time have become, how much more widely the Kingdom of Heaven would have been diffused, how many more souls would have been gathered into the flock of Christ, how much wickedness and how much misery would have been avoided, if, instead of being content with their own salvation, all the members of the Christian Church had gone forth upon this holy war, and stood bravely shoulder to shoulder against the common foe! Let us pray that we may have grace to do our part henceforth, if we have not done it hitherto.

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For that grace we shall truly need, and sorely need, if the duty is to be done. "We have no power of ourselves to help ourselves." We cannot hope to fight such a battle in our own unaided strength. And that thought brings us back to the more modern definition of the word "Sacrament": "An outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us . . . a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure thereof." Grace and Sacrament, then, are brought into conjunction. How we know not, to what extent we can scarcely tell; perhaps for our present purpose we need not even inquire. That grace can be, and is, continually bestowed apart from the Sacrament we are sure. At the same time, that the Sacrament is a means of grace let no one doubt. Nor do we ask by what means the Sacrament becomes a vehicle of grace. Let it suffice for us to know that

it is such a vehicle, and that it is a pledge that such grace is given. Let us put aside our fears and our unbelief. Let us not doubt that, for all which lies before us in our strife with sin, there shall be provided strength and help and wisdom ; that we shall go forth from hence endued with might “ in the inner man ” to do and to endure. This is the gift of Christ, and to this gift He is pledged by our participation in the Holy Feast, as truly as we are pledged to live for Him and to do battle on His behalf.

And so the *Sacramentum* becomes a double oath : we, on our part, pledge fidelity in the war ; He, on His part, pledges fidelity in the provision of “ grace to help in every time of need.” Let no one start when we say that this covenant of service and of grace is confirmed by a double oath, for the Divine oath as a pledge of God’s fidelity to man is mentioned more than once in Bible history. “ By Myself have I sworn, saith the LORD ” to our great forefather Abraham (Gen. xxii. 16) ; “ Once have I sworn by My holiness that I will not lie unto David ” (Ps. lxxxix. 35) ; “ God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heir of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath ” (Heb. vi. 17). So now, as by an oath, He seals to us the gift of His grace, and we are brought by the double pledge into a special covenant relationship to JEHOVAH-JESUS. What a glorious and blessed position ! And yet how tremendously and awfully solemn ! Who could endure the thought of such a relationship if it were not for the promised and included grace ? For, surely, we dare not go out

into life and live as if such a covenant were not ; we can no longer yield our bodies as instruments of sin ; we cannot grovel, henceforth, in the mire of sensuality or selfishness ; we cannot be careless, apathetic, indifferent in regard to the honour and the kingdom of our Lord while there exists between us this pledge of mutual fidelity.

Of one thing let us be sure : on His side, at any rate, it will not be broken ; He ever has been, and is, and ever will be, a covenant-keeping God. The promised grace will assuredly be given—nay, it is given already in that very Sacrament which is its pledge—and shall be given, not only now, but always—"in every time of need." We need, therefore, neither fail nor fear ; the grace—the strength, the presence, the wisdom, the help—is there, and if we fail, it will be because we do not lay hold upon it and use it as we should. Victory "over all the power of the enemy" lies within our grasp, and the Master's "Well done !" is already potentially ours. We should lay hold upon this fact, lest the very solemnity and responsibility of the relationship scare us from entering into such a covenant with God. The Devil, ever busy to hinder us from usefulness and blessing, will not fail to suggest to us that we dare not risk such a position ; he will tell us that we must inevitably fail, and that the failure will entail upon us a punishment too horrible for words. As usual, there will be a grain of truth mixed with the Satanic lie. That we shall fail more or less is unhappily but too probable ; we know the weakness of our mortal flesh too well to be deceived upon that point. *All* that we ought to be we shall not be ; *all* that we

ought to do will not be accomplished. But that we must fail is false ; we need not, for there is grace sufficient ; and that our failures—so long as they are not persistent and unrepented—will entail upon us a horrible punishment is not true ; for we deal with the Incarnate God, and “ He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are but dust,” and after every failure we may come, in the bitterness of our repentance, in our shame and contrition, in our confusion of face, to “ the same Lord, whose property is always to have mercy,” who is our Advocate with the Father and the propitiation for our sins, and He shall “ make us clean from all sin,” and give us “ more grace,” and send us forth again with a sweet renewal of the covenant of love, to witness afresh for Him, and to engage once more in the holy warfare to which we have been called.

ADDENDUM.

It is very noteworthy that the idea of the pledge, or oath, applies to the Church's conception of the other Sacrament ordained by Christ, at any rate as far as one of the parties thereto is concerned. In Holy Baptism such a pledge, or oath, is made by the sponsors on the part of the infant baptized, and the relationship is sealed and accepted in the Divine behalf by the minister in the familiar words : “ We receive this child into the congregation of Christ's flock, and do sign him with the sign of the cross ; in

token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under His banner against sin, the world, and the devil ; and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end." The loyalty and the military service are necessarily postponed, but the enlistment is treated as complete, and is officially accepted and sealed ; and such acceptance may well be taken as implying and including a promise of the necessary grace.

V

Worship

HOLY Communion has sometimes been called "the highest act of worship." The phrase does not wholly commend itself to us, for, in the first place, worship is not an act, but a life. We have been accustomed to think of psalmody and prayer and prostration as worship, but a moment's careful thought will convince us that those things can be done and offered in the midst of sin, either actual or mental, and that true worship must be something far more spiritual, and therefore far deeper, than they. True worship is fidelity, obedience, self-surrender, self-forgetfulness, the absolute yielding up of the whole being to the will and control of another, without question and without reserve. In a word, worship is not an act, but a life. It may be retorted that a life must have an outward expression, and that expression must be an act, or a series of acts. True! And Holy Communion may be, and no doubt is, such an expression. But, even so, we doubt if it can be said to be the *highest* expression of worship. There is so much to be gained in it for ourselves that utter self-abandonment is wellnigh impossible, even if it be desirable. Moreover, it is

but a recurring condition, or action, and we are, surely, to worship, not now and then, but always. To our mind the self-denying life, the unceasing attempt to fulfil all the Divine will, the close following of the Master, the visiting of the widow and the fatherless, the walking humbly with our God, are higher expressions of true worship than even attendance at the Table of our Lord.

Nevertheless, we are here to worship and to express our worship, and we have no hesitation in designating Holy Communion as a *perfect* act of worship—or rather, a perfect expression of worship—and that it is so we hope to prove in the course of the present Meditation.

For, in the expression of worship there must be five things—Humiliation, Confession, Prayer, Praise, and Sacrifice. With some of these we have dealt, more or less, already ; we will confine ourselves at present to the latter.

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Let us remember, to begin with, that we have come to what is truly and emphatically a place of sacrifice—not, we need hardly say, of propitiatory sacrifice. We have come, not to an altar, as the word is sometimes understood, but to a table. “ We have an altar,” an altar of propitiation ; and of the Sacrifice which was offered upon it we may eat, and must eat if we would live. But that altar is at Calvary, not here. The one offering, the “ full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world ” has been offered upon it once for all, and for us—nay, for any man—“ there remaineth no more sacrifice for

sin." But none the less, this is the place of sacrifice, or it is not the place of worship, for the two things are so inseparably joined that the one cannot exist without the other. We have here a truth which some of us are slow to learn. That there are blessings to be obtained at the Lord's Table we know full well, and we are eager to experience them ; but we forget—we are not always anxious to remember—that we come here, not only to get, but to give, that our worship demands sacrifice as truly as it promises enrichment. Too often, indeed, men shrink from this thought, and do not wish to be reminded of it. On no account let us so deceive ourselves in the matter ; no shutting our eyes to the fact will make it less a fact ; spiritual realities cannot be safely played with by any man—they remain realities however we may strive to forget or to ignore them—and if we fail to render our sacrifices we shall fail to worship, and we shall fail also to obtain the blessings which this Holy Feast was intended to bestow. We therefore proceed to inquire what are the things which we are called upon to present at Holy Communion.

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And, first of all, there are the Non-living Sacrifices. " We humbly beseech Thee most mercifully to accept our alms and oblations . . . which we offer unto Thy Divine Majesty." The alms and oblations referred to including, of course, the gifts of the faithful and the bread and wine. Here, as upon an altar, we lay these things and pray for their acceptance by the Majesty of Heaven. But do we so present them for their own sake alone ? Are

they of such value, in themselves, as to be fit offerings to Him who is the Maker and the Owner of the universe? Are a few base coins and a few mouthfuls of bread and wine gifts which, regarded for their own sake alone, are likely to please Him or for which He can have either necessity or use? Surely not. Offered as though they were, given as though we were enriching Him, presented merely as things acceptable for their value, they must be almost offensive in His eyes. True, He delights in the gifts of His people; but only when those gifts are the expression of something beyond themselves, and when the heart which offers them sees in them a significance deeper than the mere giving of the gifts. Hence we must look upon these alms and oblations, and upon their presentation, as symbols of something more than that which meets the eye.

Our alms—what is the presentation of them but an acknowledgment of the fact that all our goods belong to God? Do we not lay the part upon His altar in sign and token that the whole is His, that we are but the stewards (His stewards), and not the possessors, of all our so-called wealth? We ourselves are His; not only did He create us, but He redeemed us. We are bond-slaves, therefore, and, even if we had any right to our property before, we have none now, for a slave can have no property; he, and all that is his, belongs to his master. But we had not even any such previous right; we did not create, we did not even earn unaided the things we fondly call our own:

“ All good gifts around us
Are sent from heaven above.”

All we have has been given us by God, or at least it has been entrusted to us for the purposes of stewardship by Him ; and as we lay part of it on the Holy Table we admit His rights and our responsibility in the matter.

And is not the same thought, as regards our life, set forth by the offering of the bread and wine ? Does not that bread and wine irresistibly remind us of the shewbread offered upon another Table of the Lord in the Tabernacle of old ; and does not the offering, in this case as in that, typify the fact that our life depends upon the presence of our God ? As we have said elsewhere, " We do not mean our spiritual life alone, we mean our life. It is God ' in whom we live, and move, and have our being.' He is the ' Lord and Giver of life.' By His word we were created, by His breath we were inspired. Should He withhold His presence from us we should sink into our original dust, for ' man shall not live by bread alone.' The very bread we eat would fail to sustain us, and we should die if He did not give His presence, His power, to that bread."¹ This is a fact which we are prone to overlook ; and it is well that we should be reminded of it, and it is well that we should acknowledge it when we come, as we do now, for the purposes of worship and communion into the presence of our God. Nor must we forget that what is true of our natural life is none the less true of our spiritual life. He is our life, and therefore our life is His. " Ye are not your own," that is the message of Christianity, both as regards our bodies and our souls.

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¹ "The Tabernacle and its Teaching," by the same author.

From this thought the transition (or progress) to the Living Sacrifices is obvious and easy. We present not only the symbols of the things, but the things themselves. "And here we offer and present unto Thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto Thee." Souls and bodies—life, that is, both in the abstract and in the concrete; the life, as life, and that wherewith alone life can at present express itself. In this offering, then, we lay, as upon an invisible altar, the whole of our being, both physical and spiritual, a whole Burnt-Sacrifice to God.

Is the practical significance of such a sacrifice far to seek? Is it not clearly this—a promise of self-dedication, to be worked out in the life, day by day, while we sojourn upon earth? For such words as we have just used are not intended, surely, to be mere emotional and pious phrases, signifying nothing, leading to nothing, producing no result in the experience of those who utter them. We have dedicated ourselves and all our powers to God; then henceforth all that which is included in that sacrifice must be used as if it were His, and not our own. We have said, in effect:

"Take my soul and body's powers;
Take my memory, mind, and will;
All my goods, and all my hours,
All I know, and all I feel."

But the prayer will be a solemn mockery if we do not let Him have them. We must realize, day by day and hour by hour, that they are His; in His sight they must be lived, in His service they must be spent; we must seek to "glorify God in our

bodies and in our spirits, which are His." Every act of the body, every thought of the mind, every impulse of the will, every ambition of the life, every affection of the heart, should henceforth find its centre in Him ; all that is purely selfish should be cast aside, all that is evil repressed. " Ye are not your own " should be the ever-present thought ; and, for us, " Holiness unto the Lord " should be graven upon the pots and pans, and inscribed upon the bells of the horses, as well as written over the altars of His house.

It is this attitude of heart and mind and soul, and this alone, which will produce that self-denying life which is the truest worship. It is this, and this alone, which will enable us to place ourselves at all times and in all circumstances at His absolute disposal, to be in everything obedient, not only to His expressed commandments, but to all the dictates of what we feel to be His will. It is this which will guide us aright in our use of those good gifts with which He has entrusted us as His stewards. It is this which will save us from yielding to the blandishments of the world, the flesh, or the Devil. And it is this, and nothing less than this, which He requires at our hands, and which we profess to offer when we come at His invitation to the Table of our Lord.

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Do we contemplate such a sacrifice with shrinking and with fear ? Does the Evil One whisper to us that to make it is to yield up our lives to a despotism that will rob them of their joy ? We may banish the thought at once and for ever. True, it is a despotism to which we are yielding ourselves. The

word "despot," as applied to God, is a term of Biblical, and therefore Divine, authority ("Εως πότε, ὁ δεσπότης ὁ ἅγιος καὶ ὁ ἀληθινός — Rev. vi. 10, and other places); but there are despotisms and despotisms, and *this* is the despotism of love. Naught but peace and joy, naught but safety and blessing, can come to us as the result of our full surrender to Him. He will never impoverish our lives; He will never lessen our gladness; His yoke, willingly borne, will never prove irksome; His burden will never be heavy; His service, though a bond-slavery, will never crush the heart that delights to do its Master's will.

Nor let us be discouraged because we have failed to live out the sacrifice as we ought to have done in the days that are gone. We have made the offering before in the selfsame words we dare not remember how many times, but we have taken back the gifts and used them for ourselves. No earthly friend would tolerate such treatment at our hands; he would scorn to receive gifts repeatedly offered and as repeatedly recalled. Can we hope that this new dedication of ourselves will find acceptance after all our failures in the past? Yes, without doubt or misgiving we may so hope, for this is not an earthly friend merely, but the heavenly; there is no thought of its own injured dignity in this great, loving heart, else it had never been our friend at all. Save only for the sake of penitence, we may "let the dead past bury its dead"; all the failures, all the shortcomings, all the broken vows, may be forgotten, save as they serve to remind us of our weakness and His love and to stimulate us to greater

watchfulness in the future. And here and now we may renew our covenant and lay our gifts afresh at our Redeemer's feet.

No heart that truly loves its Lord will find in this consoling thought any encouragement to go out and repeat the history of unfaithfulness. There is abundant grace for the chief of sinners in the love of Christ—"Grace to cover all my sin"—but shall I, therefore, "continue in sin that grace may abound"? "God forbid!" will be the answer of every true disciple of our Lord. That would be fatal indeed; no past unfaithfulness can unfit me for offering sacrifice; the purpose of unfaithfulness in the future would shut me out from true communion altogether. So, then, let us once again present ourselves in sacrifice to Him whose due such a presentation is. We have confessed our sin, the Divine absolution has been assured, we are at peace with God, we have partaken of the Peace-Offering, it has been to us a *Sacramentum*, a covenant of grace—of grace assured to us by the pledge, of grace given to us by the Master—let us renew our offerings, and go out in the strength of that grace to work out the sacrifice in our daily lives as we have never done before.

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There yet remain the Impersonal Sacrifices of Prayer and Praise and Thanksgiving. "We humbly beseech Thee, most mercifully . . . to receive these our prayers, which we offer unto Thine Divine Majesty." "We Thy humble servants entirely desire Thy Fatherly goodness most mercifully to accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving."

It would seem, at first sight, as if none of these

things could be real sacrifices ; yet the Prayer-Book by implication reckons prayer as one, uniting it with the offering of alms and oblations, and does the same in set terms as regards praise and thanksgiving. " But," says someone, " prayer *cannot* in itself be a sacrifice." Can it not ? Has the person who makes that statement really learned to pray ? Has he ever realized what prayer truly is ? For true prayer is much more than the mere use of words ; it is something far higher and deeper than the bare utterance of a series of requests for personal advantages. True prayer is soul-wrestling for the glory of God and the blessedness of man. The name, the kingdom, the glory of the Father are the things that loom the largest on the horizon, that fill the widest space in the heart of him that truly prays. For himself he will pray, it is true ; but the very petitions for his own forgiveness and protection and enrichment will be made with the desire that they may redound to the honour of his Lord. And, after all, personal blessing will engross but a small part of his petitions ; the greater portion of his prayer will be for others—for the lost, the sinful, the sad, the poor, for his spiritual brethren, for the heathen at home and abroad, for all who desire and for all who need his intercession. Does this call for no sacrifice of time, of thought, of self-denial, of nervous energy, and of vital force ? Are there not " strong crying and tears," are there not almost " groanings that cannot be uttered," connected with such an exercise if it be more than a mere empty form ?

The same is true, though perhaps in a less degree, in the case of thanksgiving and praise. Here, too,

there must be a forgetfulness of self, a self-abandonment to the rapture of adoration and gratitude which, from whatever cause, is foreign to the nature and the heart of man, a self-abasement and a self-forgetfulness which are well-pleasing in the sight of God. These things—prayer, praise, thanksgiving—are the holy incense which we offer with our sacrifices, as upon the altar of our Lord, when we come to hold communion with Him; which we should offer always and everywhere in a daily life consecrated by a communion that knows no interruption, lived in the conscious presence of our Master and our Friend. No better, no higher emblems of that life (which is truest worship) can possibly be conceived than these—confession, humiliation, sacrifice; the sacrifice of our possessions, of our life, of ourselves, of our prayers, of our thanksgiving, and of our praise. These are the true offerings of a loving heart. We leave them here, therefore, we present them, “O Lord God, Son of the Father, that takest away the sins of the world,” conscious of their many imperfections, we present them unto Thee; and “although we be unworthy, through our manifold sins, to offer unto Thee any sacrifice, yet we beseech Thee to accept this our bounden duty and service.” Refuse not, O Lord, we entreat Thee, our unworthy oblations:

“Whate’er has risen from heart sincere,
Each upward glance of filial fear,
Each litany, devoutly prayed,
Each gift upon Thine altar laid,
Each tear, regretful of the past,
Each longing o’er the future cast,
Each true resolve, each solemn vow,
Jesu, our Lord, accept them now.”

VI

Relationship

HITHERTO we have considered Holy Communion as it stands related to ourselves alone. We now approach another and a wider view of it. We are not the only persons concerned ; " there are others." We have come to the Table of our Lord not only as disciples, or followers, or soldiers, of Christ ; we have come as members of a Divine family, as sons and daughters of the King. It is natural that, in coming to the Lord's Table, we should centre our thoughts largely upon Him, but we must not forget that we come no less to meet the Father of our spirits ; that He is as truly present as the Divine Son. " Our fellowship," says S. John, " is with the Father " (1 John i. 3) ; nay, He Himself says, " Let *us* eat and be merry " (Luke xv. 23). This, then, is the place of family reunion—the place where from the cares, and the duties and the pleasures of earth, we gather to hold high converse with all the Persons of the Blessed Trinity. The world, with all its tumult, all its hurry, all its glitter, all its temptations, is banished ; we are gathered at the family Board, we are shut in with God. Of course, we may have, and ought to have,

communion with the Highest anywhere and everywhere ; there is no place where the Christian ought to be in which we may not hold converse with Heaven. But this is the spot where that converse and that communion find their greatest opportunity ; this is the hour in which they should find their highest expression. It is the place of confidence, for here we may tell out all that is in our hearts, and whisper our hopes and our fears, our successes and our failures, our joys and our sorrows, our needs and our poverty, into the ear of Him who is able at once to sympathize and help. It is the place of counsel, for as we lay bare the secrets and purposes of our hearts and lives, we shall receive in reply such words of hope and stimulus, or such gentle discouragement and comfort, as shall seem best to Him who is " too wise to err, too good to be unkind." It is the place of peace—of peace with God, for it answers to the peace-offering of old ; of personal peace, for all that would distress or disturb us has been left outside. It is the place of rest, for the strife and toil of earth are alike suspended while we gather here. It is the place of refreshment : on weary brain, and tired heart, and jarring nerve, there falls the soft, sweet dew of a holy calm, as though we walked already by the tideless sea of glass. Yet none of these things, nor all of them, cause the greatest resemblance between this spot and heaven. It is the presence of the Father and the Son—the consciousness of sonship and of brotherhood ; it is the breath of the Holy Ghost, like a diviner air than that of earth, sweeping more sensibly through all the recesses of our being ; in a word, it is God manifest, not in the flesh, but

in spirit to the eyes of faith. We come as guests, it is true, but not as strangers, not as mere acquaintances, to the Board. No social mask need be, or ought to be, worn upon our faces here. We are not bound, as mere guests would be, to put any restraint upon our feelings ; we need hide no sorrow, we need repress no joy, we need play no part ; we are members of one family at our Father's Table, gathered with each other and with Him, assured of His warmest love ; we may lay bare frankly, openly, without hesitation, without shame (unless they be sinful), the deepest secrets of our breasts. Have we any griefs, difficulties, temptations, perplexities ? We shall find comfort, sympathy, guidance. Have we sins, failures, shortcomings ? We shall receive ungrudging pardon. Have we hopes, desires, ambitions, plans ? We may tell them freely, not to each other, but to Him, and learn from His lips how far they are in accordance with His holy will. In a word, whatever are the rights and privileges of childhood in its father's house belong to us as we gather round the Table of our Lord.

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No truly Christian heart will fail to appreciate these privileges ; but, like all privileges, they involve a certain amount of responsibility. If we gather here as members of one family, if we enjoy the rest, the peace, the gladness, of so gathering, we must not forget our duties as brethren, and as sons and daughters of the King. There is, first of all, the family honour to consider ; we must guard our Father's reputation, and, for His sake, our own. We saw that we were bound, as disciples, to live such lives as should bring glory to

our Master. Our present thought carries us a step farther : it becomes us so to live that we shall not bring discredit upon our profession, and that, not merely as a matter of duty, but out of love to the Father and to the brethren, lest some breath of shame should fall upon them. He is a strange son who cares not for his father's honour, or for the reputation of the family to which he belongs. Nay, he is not only a strange son, he is lacking in all the finer sensibilities of manhood, and will inevitably disgrace both himself and them. We are taught the place of pre-eminence which this consideration should hold in our hearts by the position it occupies in the Lord's Prayer, in which we join immediately after partaking of the bread and wine. " Our Father . . . hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." This, before all else, is to be the deepest and the dearest wish of our childlike hearts. Then we shall avoid all that is inconsistent with such petitions, not merely because duty and loyalty demand it, but as a matter of love. Our affections will prompt us, even more than our sense of obligation, to strive for the honour of our Father and for that of the family to which we belong. There will be an *esprit de corps*, if the phrase may be permitted in such a connection ; there will be a shrinking from the very thought of all that would sully the reputation of those to whom we are bound by the ties of relationship and love.

Not only is this our duty, but the Father asks it at our hands. He does not ask for immediate perfection—or, at least, He does not expect it—" He

knows our feeble frame " ; He knows that there will be failures, that we shall make mistakes, that we shall come short of the glory that ought to manifest itself in the seed-royal of heaven. He is no stern, hard Parent ; if He chides us, it will be gently and in love, with compassion and with pity. But He does ask that we should cherish the intention, and that we should make the endeavour, the unceasing endeavour, to let our light so shine before men that they may glorify Him, and that they may realize the difference that should exist between the children of this world and the children of light. Has this thought impressed itself upon our hearts ? Has our love for God and our care for our Father's name checked us when we have been prompted to speak the hasty word or to do the unworthy deed ? Has love for our Elder Brother, even more than the sense of responsibility to our King, compelled us to be bold and fearless in our testimony, incorruptible in our virtue, and tireless in our efforts for the glory of the Lord ? If not, if we have been forgetful, cold, careless, indifferent in this respect ; then—

" 'Mid this sweet stillness, while we bow,
Jesu, our Lord, forgive us now."

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And then, surely, there are duties not only to the Father and to our Elder Brother, but to our brethren who are yet upon earth. Does the family gathering bring us into no relationship of responsibility to those who gather with us at the Table, and who are common partakers with us of the Holy Bread ? Are there no things which they have a right to

expect from us, as brothers and sisters, which they may not—at any rate, with any hope of success—demand from the world? Are we not bound to them by ties of an affection all the more real that it is spiritual and not natural? And are we not bound to manifest that affection by words and deeds of love? Is not this one of the tests of the reality of our love for the Divine? “He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” (1 John iv. 20). Nay, is not some measure of such love the very test of our Christianity? “He that loveth not his brother abideth in death” (1 John iii. 14). Nor is it to be a passive but an active affection. “Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth” (1 John iii. 18). It is not idle emotion that is required of us, but practical charity—the true charity (*i.e.*, love)—which gives not only common alms, but those far rare and more refreshing cups of cold water, forgiveness, sympathy, forbearance, help. How tender, and pitiful, and patient, and helpful we might be, and too often are not, to our brethren in Christ! How we might bear with their frailties and their limitations! How we might bury all their shortcomings and their sins in the silence of our own breasts, or mention them only at the Throne of Grace! How we might speak words of comfort and encouragement! How we might find opportunities to do little deeds of kindness and to speak little words of love! How many a sad heart we might cheer! How many a downcast soul we might encourage! How many a burden we might help to carry! How much more forbearing we might be

with those who vex us ! And yet we do not and are not. Why ? Partly, perhaps, because we do not think of it ; we have not realized our responsibility, we have seen neither the duty nor the glory of so doing. Partly, and perhaps oftener, because these things are such little, insignificant duties that they do not seem worth the doing ; if we could “ do some great thing,” we would not refuse or hesitate for a moment. But have we ever considered that life is made up of little things—that the opportunity for great sacrifices or heroic deeds comes to but few, and seldom ? Have we ever remembered that no one can tell the ultimate influence of the lightest word or the most trifling deed ? A cup of cold water is an insignificant matter to us, but it is the cause of endless remembrance and of highest commendation to the Master if given to one of His brethren, and out of love to Him. The poet tells us in his parable :

“ I shot an arrow into the air,
It fell to earth, I know not where ;
For so swiftly it flew the sight
Could not follow it in its flight.

“ I breathed a song into the air,
It fell to earth, I know not where ;
For who has sight so keen and strong
That it can follow the flight of song ?

“ Long, long afterward, in an oak
I found the arrow still unbroke ;
And the song, from beginning to end,
I found again in the heart of a friend.”

But we shall fare better than he, for we shall see our kind words and gentle deeds bringing forth

flowers and fruits of beauty and goodness in the lives of humanity, and shall find the echo of their melody in the heart of Christ.

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But there are others yet : there are the prodigals—those who do not gather with us at the Holy Feast. Though not sons by adoption, are they not also dear to the Father's heart ? Have they no claim of brotherhood upon our pity and our love ? We have thought of them already in connection with the travail of the Saviour's soul ; let us also think of them as they stand related to ourselves. Can we be utterly content with the music and the feasting while they, “ made in the image of the same dear God,” are out in the far country, in hunger and loneliness of heart, feeding the stranger's swine ? Far be the spirit of the elder brother of the parable from us. Let us see to it that we cherish none of that selfishness which is content with its own personal salvation, or of that still more unlovely pride which, wrapt in the mantle of its self-righteousness, declares :

“ The temple of the Lord are we,
And heathen all beside.”

Let us take care that we do not grow careless, cold, disdainful, in regard to those who do not gather with us here, and fondly imagine them to be less favoured, because less worthy, than ourselves. Surely our very privileges—our peace, our joy, our security—as we gather here should lead us to long that others—all others—might be partakers with us in the blessedness which we experience to-day. Shall we not seek the lost, that we may save them

by bringing them to the Saviour's feet ? Shall not our love leap up into a holy and ardent flame as we think of the outcast and the perishing ? Shall we not ask how best we may turn that love into practical effort for their reclamation and their peace ?

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With these thoughts in our minds we are led very naturally to another—namely, that this Holy Table is the place of intercession ; that we gather here as members of a royal priesthood ; and that it is at once our privilege and our duty to “ pray for all sorts and conditions of men.” For our spiritual brethren, that they may be guided, comforted, blessed ; for those outside, that they may be brought into the way of truth. This privilege of intercession for all men is one of the highest, if not the highest, that appertains to our Christian profession. To take the needs of others and to make them our own ; to strive to enter into their necessities, their cares, their sorrows, their pains, their disappointments, their hopes, their fears, that we may spread them before the Mercy Seat and plead with the Father on behalf of those who need our prayers—this is to “ bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.” This privilege of intercession is one which we are all too slow to exercise. We are so enslaved by the habits of our unhappy selfishness that our very prayers partake of the evil thing ; our sympathies so absorbed by the sense of our own needs that we become forgetful of the necessities of others. “ We pray, oh yes, we pray—‘ God bless me and mine, my soul and my body, my home and my friends, my basket and my store, my life in this

world, and my prospects in the world to come.' But how little we pray, and how seldom, for others : for the poor and the lone and the sad ; for the rich, and the forgetful and the careless ; for the heathen who have never heard the precious word of God ; for the heathen who *have* heard it and are heathen still, though they live in a so-called Christian land." And herein we injure both ourselves and others, for we deprive them of the help and blessing which our prayers might obtain on their behalf, and we neglect our office as priests of the Most High, to the great impoverishment of our own Christian lives. For let us depend upon it that if we would have our own souls like watered gardens, full of sweetness, flowers, and fruit, there is no surer method of attaining our desire than to care for the souls and for the necessities of other people. Every heartfelt prayer breathed to heaven for our brother man returns, like the soft south wind from heaven, laden with spiritual blessing for him who uttered it.

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And then, last of all, surely this Holy Feast is at once the type and the promise of the eternal Feast of heaven. " Grant," we pray sometimes—" grant, O Lord, we beseech Thee, that we who have now gathered around Thy Table on earth, may gather round Thy Table in heaven, and sit down at the marriage-supper of the Lamb." That this may be so is our hope and expectation amid " all the changes and chances of this mortal life." Alas, the blessedness, the peace, the rest, of these earthly Communion is but too brief, and comes all too seldom. We are compelled to rise and go out from the Shechinah, to

walk in the false glitter of the world ; to hear, instead of the Divine voice, the strident tones of earth ; to quit the peace and calm of the holy Temple and to be swallowed up and surrounded by the dust and din of the world's fevered strife. We must go out, sorely against our will it may be, but we must, and we know not what awaits us on the other side the door. How much of sorrow, how much of pain ; what cares, what temptations, what bereavements will befall us, we know not, nor can guess. How much rather would we stay. " Lord, it is good for us to be here," we sigh, and though we need build no tabernacles, we long to remain, as Peter longed, upon the Mount of Transfiguration. But it may not be ; we must go down to the level of the common multitude, to lead what we are all too inclined to call the common life. How blessed, then, to remember that " it is only till He come " ! How blessed to be reminded that these brief earthly feasts are but foretastes of that Home-Feast which is yet in store ; that there is a day before us when we shall sit down with Him in His kingdom, when His banner over us shall be love (as, for that matter, it is to-day), when we shall eat and drink with Him as we do now, when we shall have an even closer communion with Him than we have here, when we shall behold His open face and see Him as He is ! But oh, above all, how blessed to be assured that *that* feast is eternal ; that the rest, and the joy, and the peace, and the satisfaction, which awaits us at that heavenly Board shall know no interruption and shall never cease ! That, once there, we shall be for ever safe from all the temptations and the trials of earth ; that, once there,

naught can ever rob us of the manifested presence of our Father and our Lord ; that, once there, we shall gather an unbroken family, and all the ravelled threads of love and friendship shall be knitted up in a reunion that shall know no end. With this thought in our minds, let us go bravely out to do and to endure ; let us “ comfort one another ” with the assurance that “ it is only till He come.”

“ Till He come ! Oh, let the words
Linger on the trembling chords ;
Let the little while between
In their golden light be seen ;
Let us think how heaven and home
Lie beyond that ‘ Till He come.’ ”

VII

The Heavenly Vision

“ **W**HERE there is no vision, the people perish.” Such is the declaration of the Holy Book. Yet lack of vision is the great characteristic, as it is the great danger, of our modern life. We are surrounded by the unseen ; all the glories of the spiritual universe are about us upon every hand ; but they are too often hidden from us by the things that are tangible. We are by nature materialists, and we live in a materialistic age. The things of earth are nearer to our gaze than the things of heaven, and we allow them to blind us by their proximity until we get a false estimate of their relative importance. A man may take a penny and hold it so close to his eye that it blots out all the fair glories of the earth and of the heavens ; so we too often hold the lower things so close to us that there grows upon us a pernicious state of mind in which we either disbelieve in the things we no longer see, or come to consider them as relatively unimportant, to be passed over lightly, to be neglected, or to be relegated to the future ; to be held merely as pious, but shadowy, opinions that have no distinct relation to our present life. Both the procedure and its result

are directly contrary to the express teaching of the Word of God. We are to look, "not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen"—not seen, that is, of course, with our mortal eyes. We are not to gaze upon, not to fix our attention upon, the visible things of earth; we are to look *through* them; they are to be but the *eidola*—the images of things unseen—pictures by which, as in an illustrated primer, we are to learn lessons of those things which "eye hath not seen," and of which, save for their revelation, it had not "entered into the heart of man to conceive." And that because those unseen things are the true realities of which the things of earth are but the shadows, and passing shadows at that; "for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Woe to us if we come to believe that such visions are impossible. Woe to us if we imagine that there is nothing in the universe to be seen, save that which meets our mortal eyes. "Where there is no vision, the people perish." Blinded by the petty things of earth—the things of every day—cramped within the narrow horizon of its material surroundings, the soul becomes sordid, shrivelled, mean, and is in pressing and immediate danger of death.

Here, if anywhere, we should be delivered from such a danger as that. For, surely, this Hermon height of communion with our Lord is essentially the place of vision. "The things of time and sense" have been left behind us; we have been—

" . . . a little space
From daily tasks set free ";

we have laid our daily cares at the Master's feet ; the rush and the rattle of the world's strife cannot reach us here ; the glitter of its tinsel no longer flashes in our eyes. In this rare atmosphere, free from the fogs of earth, may we not expect to see, with supernatural clearness, things that may have escaped our gaze in the hurry and the dimness of our common life ?

* * * * *

Is there, for instance, no vision of Love awaiting us here, where we see our Lord " evidently set forth, crucified," amongst us ? Love ! The love of God ! We have heard of it before, but have we ever seen it as we see it here ? " So God loved the world " —we rejoice in the Prayer-Book version there—" so God loved the world that He gave " : yes, love, true love is ever giving ; but what was it that He gave ? We shall be able to measure the affection better when we know the nature of the sacrifice. " He gave His only-begotten Son." Human language fails to vocalize the impression those words make upon our hearts as their import begins to dawn upon our minds. We make our puny protests of affection, we celebrate our human loves in song and story, but what know we of Love compared with this ? " Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us " ; loved us when, to all human seeing, we were utterly unlovable ; loved us in our lost estate, in all the vileness and corruption of our sin ; loved when we had not a spark of affection for Him to beget that love ; and so loved us that He gave His best and costliest of gifts, His only-begotten Son, for our redemption and our peace. The length, the

breadth, the depth, the height, of such a love passes our knowledge, and even so much as we can appreciate, defies human speech. Yet there is the evidence of it, the memorial of it, before our wondering eyes. Nor less are these Sacred Symbols the evidence of the equal love of Him who gave Himself ; of Him who

“ . . . laid His glory by,
And wrapped Him in our clay ” ;

who bore the poverty and the shame, the persecution and the Cross, that the Father's purposes, and His own, might be accomplished, and that we might be restored to the eternal home from which we had wandered, and to the glorious inheritance which we had lost. We cannot overestimate or overmagnify the love of the Father ; but, as we dwell upon it, let us beware that we do not underestimate the love of the Son. Not less was His sacrifice, not less the affection that prompted it. We may express its equality thus—

“ Oh, 'twas love, 'twas wondrous love
That { *sent* } the Saviour from above
 { *brought* }
To die on Calvary.”

Of that love, as we have said, we have heard many a time before, but here we see it as we see it nowhere else ; here the consciousness of it burns itself as a consuming fire into our very souls.

But there is yet another love, or rather another manifestation of the same love : there is “ the love of the Spirit.” There is the patience that has waited, and watched, and wooed, and striven for our salvation through all the weary years of our exile and our

rebellion. How comes it that we, so vile, so sinful, so careless, so callous, instead of being out in the far country, in hunger and in rags, are sitting, "clothed, and in our right mind," at the Table of our Lord? What is our presence at Communion, with all the blessings which that presence involves, but a manifestation and a triumph of love—of love which is high as the heavens above any natural conception of our fallen hearts? Who can estimate that depth of affection which has borne with us, refusing to be repelled or extinguished; which has mourned over us, as once it mourned over rebellious Ephraim; which would not give us up in spite of our repeated refusals to listen to its voice; which has followed us in all our wanderings, brooded over us in all our dangers, and brought us at last to the Father's feet and to the Father's Board? This is the Mount of Vision; and the first and highest vision that meets our gaze is the vision of Divine Love.

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And surely out of that, as in a dissolving view, there grows the vision of duty—of debt, that is, for duty is debt. (We say we "ought" to do this or that; do we realize that we mean we "owe" to do it, that to leave it undone is to repudiate our just indebtedness to another, that omission is therefore dishonesty?) "How much owest thou unto thy Lord?" How much indeed! Who can begin to cast up the account, with the vision of that Love before his eyes? What ought we not to render in return? What of obedience, what of consecration, what of fidelity, what of self-surrender, what of *love*, ought we not to lay at His feet? With

what alabaster boxes of ointment, most precious, ought we not to anoint that sacred head? What lifetime of devotion, of sacrifice, of service, could ever repay the smallest part of the Father's heart for us, so manifested; what yielding, henceforth, to the softest whisper of the Spirit's voice can express our sense of gratitude to Him who wooed and won us, who brought us up "out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set our feet upon a rock, and established our goings," and hath filled our hearts with gladness and our mouths with song? Debt, we say; that is, duty, duty not only to be seen and talked about, but duty to be done. Duty robbed of its irksomeness, of its pettiness, of its slavery, of its monotony, by the thought that, in some faint and feeble way, we are endeavouring, in the doing of it gladly and willingly, to acknowledge—though we cannot discharge—the mighty debt of love, and obedience, and gratitude, which we owe to God.

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And then, surely, out of that vision of love there also grows one of hope. Of hope for ourselves. Is it possible that we could ever have doubted God, His care for us, His unceasing thought of us, His willingness to bless, His purpose to provide for us, His determination to save us to the end? All such misgivings vanish, leaving a blush of shame upon our cheeks that they were ever harboured, as we gather here.

"His love in times past forbids us to think
He'll leave us at last in trouble to sink."

We cannot believe that the grace and patience which have brought us thus far will abandon us, now or

ever, to our spiritual foes. Of a wider hope than that ; of hope for the race. Surely the love which “ found out the way ” for our redemption will work out its purposes, not alone in us, but ultimately in mankind. Sometimes when we were down in earth’s valleys it seemed otherwise. The world, the flesh, and the Devil appeared to be gaining the victory. Rampant wickedness, blatant atheism, unbridled lust, cold indifference, seemed to be the order of the day. We were apt to become pessimistic, to tremble for the Ark of God, to cry in our agony of soul, “ All, all is lost.” Not so here : our lips could not frame the words, our hearts do not feel them. We cannot doubt that the love and the grace which has conquered us will conquer the world ; that—it may be by slow degrees—after many apparent failures, in the end He will be King over all the earth. And so there comes to us the vision of a palingenesis, a new creation, and we seem to see already the day when strife, and discord, and sin, and misery, shall be banished ; when He shall reign whose right it is ; when in our midst shall be established the sanctuary of the Highest in which He shall dwell, in personal presence, amongst His own ; and we are,

“ Like the seer of Patmos, gazing
On the glory downward blazing,
Till upon earth’s grateful sod
Rests the City of our God.”

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But there is a vision yet more glorious, the vision of God Himself ; of God manifested first of all in the face of Jesus Christ, and then manifested in perfect holiness, in the heart and life of us His children.

"I pray Thee," said Moses, "show me Thy glory," but no open vision of the Highest could be vouchsafed to him, since the Holy Ghost was not yet given, and of the eyes of flesh it was ever true that "no man hath seen God at any time, neither indeed can see Him." But we are in better case, for to us spiritual eyes have been granted, and we may see the things that are spiritually discerned—nay, with those eyes we may see "the King in His beauty," and gaze upon Deity itself.

"Here, O my Lord, I see Thee face to face"—not fully yet, nor with unveiled vision, but with eyes of faith: catching more than glimpses of Thy glory; feasting heart and soul upon Thy beauty; drinking in the sweetness of Thy love; gazing in rapture on Thy purity; seeing, as I never saw before, the height of spotless holiness to which, as Thy son, I am called to attain.

It is, perhaps, this vision of God which fulfils the highest and ultimate purpose of our invitation to the Holy Feast. For to see God is to be like Him. "We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John iii. 2). When the beatific sight bursts in all its unshaded glory upon our view, all that defiles us, all the sin and all the selfishness, shall slough away; for to see God as He is, is to desire, with the whole heart, to be like Him, and such desire, being perfect, brings with it its own fulfilment. Hence the partial view which we gain at the Table—a view partial indeed, but ever increasing to the worthy receiver—works in us, in part, and works in us ever more and more, with each new manifestation, that change

towards holiness of life and character which shall be perfected when, with open face, we see Him as He really is.

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Tell men that these things—and others like them, for we have but chosen a few out of many—are to be seen at Holy Communion (or, indeed, elsewhere) and many of them will call you “visionaries,” and deem you little less than mad. So may the man who has been blind from his birth call him a visionary who discourses of Alpine peak, or night’s jewelled train of stars; but he would be a foolish narrator who blushed with shame at such an accusation, or held his peace, or doubted the reality of the things his eyes beheld, because of the scepticism or the sneer of him who saw them not, who could not see them because he had not eyes to see. Let us not be so foolish; let us not forbear to seek the vision because, forsooth, men will laugh at us; let us not hesitate, on proper occasion, to bear our fearless testimony to the glories that God has prepared, and is willing to show to them that love Him. We say upon proper occasion, for we are not to cast “our pearls before swine,” and it is often worse than useless to talk to the unspiritual of deep spiritual truth or high spiritual experience; the alphabet of the gospel of God’s love and grace are more fitted for such auditors. But

“What we have felt and seen
With confidence we tell,”

should be our unhindered attitude where such telling is needed for testimony’s sake, or is likely to promote the glory of God or the good of our brethren.

Esteemed to be mere dreamers of dreams and seers of visions, looked down upon with a certain amount of pity, if not of suspicion, in consequence, even by some of our fellow-Christians, we shall be in the bright succession of the prophets, and in the goodly company of those who have been persecuted for their testimony, or pitied as men "touched by the gods," because they have come down with shining faces from some Mount of Transfiguration, where they had seen things which it were scarcely wise, even if it were lawful, to relate.

VIII

The Heavenly Vision (*continued*)

THERE are certain conditions attached to the possibility of visions, even at the Table of our Lord, which we shall do well to remember, lest we fail to experience them, as many, indeed, have failed. For not every true Christian who comes to Holy Communion sees all there is to be seen when he kneels at the Feast of Love. And that, not because of any favouritism in the granting of visions, but because the conditions of sight have not been complied with as they should have been.

And, first of all, there needs Purity of Heart. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see"—not only God, but the things that appertain to God. "Purity of heart," let us remember; not perfect purity either of thought or life. None of us can lay claim to these, and if they were indispensable conditions of visions, our eyes would remain clouded or closed to the end of time. "Purity of heart"—that is, of purpose; the will, the desire, to be pure; the constant determination to avoid all that is defiling, all that is offensive, in the sight "of Him with whom we have to do." This is essential. Cherished sin, of thought or deed, will ever prove a hindrance to

the perception of the heavenly vision ; but of all forms of sin, impurity of purpose will be the most fatal to the sight. Hence it is not without wisdom that we have been taught to pray, as we approach the Table, " Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid ; cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit " ; for without that inspiration and that cleansing, we shall be but as purblind men, standing, indeed, upon the top of Nebo, but seeing little save the bare crag upon which we rest our feet. Many a man has passed through life with a shadowed and imperfect Christian experience, as it were with cataracts veiling his spiritual eyes, because his hands were defiled, or his heart unclean, in the sight of God. In this connection let us remember that we are not here essentially different from what we are in the common walk of our everyday life. A little holy emotion, a passing desire to be better, there may be in this solemn hour ; but to all intents and purposes we are neither better nor worse at the Lord's Table than we are at our own. We are here, of course, among other purposes, that we may *become* better ; but until such improvement is real and permanent, not artificial and temporary, we shall have no vision of Love, or Hope, or God. It behoves, therefore, to pray, and to pray earnestly, for that holiness, that sanctification of heart and life, without which " no man shall see the Lord."

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But, in addition to this purity of heart, there must be faithfulness to ideals. It was this, doubtless, which to a great extent singled out Saul of

Tarsus for the Divine distinction. However wrong the course which he was pursuing before his conversion, Saul was at least true to what he conceived to be the truth. His ideal, the utter suppression of "The Way," was a sadly mistaken one; but while he held it he allowed nothing to hinder him from seeking to work it out in his life. Whatever he was, he was neither a hypocrite nor a procrastinator, nor an idler. He had an aim, and he followed it; he had, or thought he had, a noble purpose, and he pursued it with all the energy and all the promptness of which his ardent nature was capable. There was something which, in his opinion, was worth doing; he did not drift on in idle lethargy, leaving the work to others, or frittering away the days in spasmodic intentions that never bore fruit in deeds; the whole force of his being was bent to the accomplishment of what he deemed to be the highest duty of existence. Hence, when his outlook changed, and a higher and worthier purpose was revealed to him, he was prepared, without a moment's hesitation, to change his plans and to consecrate his energies to the better way. It must be the same with us. Nothing short of the attainment of the highest standard known to us must satisfy the cravings of our hearts—and that not at some distant period of time, or even to-morrow, but to-day. We must be content to live on no lower level than the utmost peak of holiness or usefulness that our eyes have seen.

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This will mean, of course, obedience, both passive and active, to all that shall be revealed to us of possibility, alike of spiritual condition and of active

service. "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision," said S. Paul to King Agrippa. "Not disobedient;" there is the secret of all the further visions vouchsafed to the Apostle, and of all that he was enabled to become. "Not disobedient!" No, but at what tremendous cost! All the ideas, the prejudices, the hopes, the ambitions, the friendships, of a lifetime, had to be flung into the melting-pot at a moment's notice. A career, glowing with rich promises of honour and advancement, had to be abandoned for a life full of the probabilities of scorn, persecution, and dishonour. Nay, the very life itself had to be risked. All that men by nature value most, all that makes life worth living, in the estimation of the worldling, had to be counted but loss; and for what? For the sake of a vision, which they who had not seen it would count a madman's dream. Yet it was done, and must be done to-day by every man who, having had a glimpse of the heavenly glories, desires to gain a wider, and ever increasing, vision of the things that are unseen. For, depend upon it, there is no further revelation for him who is disobedient to that which has already been vouchsafed. "To him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that he hath." The Divine gifts are bestowed for the purpose of use and increase; and denial of stewardship, by its neglect or its misuse, will be followed in the matter of vision, as in all other matters, by its loss. Hence, if we would see more, nay, if we would continue to see at all, we must be obedient to the heavenly vision already granted to us. Passively obedient in the surrender of ourselves and all our

powers ; actively obedient in the doing of whatsoever our Lord commands, of whatsoever we behold as needful or possible to be done. And that without counting the cost. From no sacrifice must we shrink ; nothing, not even life itself, must be withheld. " Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it," and do it willingly and at once, is the inevitable law of spiritual vision. There must be no faltering and no reserve. No love of power, of ease, of reputation, of prospects, or of wealth, must be allowed to hinder us from doing, or becoming. all that we perceive to be our duty as we gain new views of holiness and God. We must offer ourselves, body, soul, and spirit—time, and talents, and possessions, and possibilities—upon the Altar of our Lord. So shall we know, if we follow on to know ; so shall we see, if we be true to what we see ; but if not, the things already revealed shall fade from our gaze, and judicial blindness shall fall upon our eyes.

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It remains but to inquire for what purposes these visions are to be vouchsafed to us. These purposes appear to be twofold. They concern, first of all, ourselves. The vision is to introduce us to a higher plane of thought and life ; to lift us above and beyond the commonplace ; to give us new views of existence and its possibilities, of holiness and its beauty, of human nature and its destiny, of God in all His power and love. The man of limited vision will be the man of narrow horizon and of meagre attainment. To achieve a high standard of success it needs that we have high ideals. We must see " the toppling crags of duty " ere we can attempt to scale

them ; we must know the possibilities of service before we can even begin to labour for their accomplishment. All our efforts will be diffuse and purposeless, or will be confined to comparative trivialities, until the heavenly vision has shown us what may be done and what God expects us to do. It is given to us, moreover, to strengthen our faith, to encourage our drooping hearts, to reinspire our courage, to assure us of the reality of those things which are hidden from our mortal gaze—

“ To teach our faint desires to rise,
And bring all heaven before our eyes.”

But perhaps this is the smaller and less important part of its purpose. It is granted to us for the sake of others. It is to fit us for the service of God and of humanity. We are permitted to climb the Mount of Transfiguration, and to see the Divine glory. We are among the chosen ones for whom the veil is lifted ; and as we gaze in rapture upon the sight, we feel, as has been said already, that “ it is good for us to be here,” and here we fain would stay, rapt in the ecstasy of communion and contemplation, until we be called to the fuller and unveiled glories of the skies. But at the foot of the mountain the lunatic world is crying out beneath the tyranny of the indwelling power of evil, and men less favoured than ourselves are striving in vain to accomplish its release. We must descend, therefore, from the mount of sight into the valley of suffering and sin. It has been good for us to have been here ; it will be better for us and for humanity that we should be there. There is a testimony to be borne, and a work

to be done, which we alone can bear and accomplish ; for the doing and bearing of which we are to be specially fitted by these hours of communion and of vision. It is ours to go down, like Moses from Mount Sinai, with our faces shining with the reflection of the Divine glory, that men may behold the radiance and seek to know its source. We are not bidden, as were the chosen Three of old, to " tell the vision to no man," for the Son of Man is risen now, and we are to be witnesses of the things which we have seen to all who are willing to hearken to our testimony. Of the things which we have *seen*, be it noted : not merely of the things which we have imagined, nor even of the things which we have heard ; not of the things which we believe to be true, upon the testimony of others, but of the things which we *know* to be true because they are things " which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon," and for the reality of which, therefore, we can vouch without the shadow of a doubt. This is the testimony that tells ; it is this, if anything, which will convince the world. No uncertain message, this, delivered " with bated breath and whispering humbleness " due to an ill-repressed uncertainty as to the truth of the intelligence ; but a message borne with " full-throated ease," the outcome of the unshaken confidence of knowledge and of sight.

And, further, it is to fit us not only for testimony, but for toil. We are to go and work for the Master's kingdom and for the salvation and uplifting of our fellow-men. How many discouragements will beset us in the task ? How often shall we feel weary, dispirited, hopeless, sad ? What can save us from

the effects of that cheerless monotony, that perpetual contact with the sordid scenes of earth, with the sordid minds of men, which our labour will involve? Surely we shall find an antidote to all these evils in the recollection of the heavenly vision. Will not our faith be stimulated, our courage reanimated, our hope reinspired, as we remember the things our eyes have seen? Can we lose heart or hope as the vision of the Divine power, the Divine love, the Divine presence, glows once more in the chambers of our memory? Can our faith be shaken, or our love chilled, by the world's coldness, or by the jibe of unbelief, as we recall these hours of Hermon intercourse and of Pisgah sight? We were weaklings, perhaps, when we ascended the mountain, but we shall have come down like "giants refreshed with new wine"; and every son of Anak, and every Goliath of Gath, shall tremble in the presence of our new-born strength. God has looked upon us, nay, we have looked upon God, and "in this our might" we shall go forth "conquering and to conquer"; strong to fight, willing to labour, meek to endure, empowered to testify, patient to wait, made, by the communion and the vision, "able ministers" of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

IX

The Paten

“GIVE us this day our daily bread.” So we have been taught to pray every day of our lives. “Give us bread ;” that is the first personal petition in the Lord’s Prayer. “Give us bread, and give it to us to-day,” is the request which is to be ever on our lips, as it must ever be in our hearts. For without bread—at least, humanly speaking—man cannot live. There are many luxuries of life, nay, there are many things which we count among its necessities with which we could dispense, if not easily, yet at least with safety ; but bread is not among them. Bread of some kind or other, be it made from wheat, or oats, or barley, or rye, or rice, or maize, or bread-fruit—that which is the essential constituent of bread, in some form or other, man must have that he may continue to exist. “All flesh is grass,” and grass, in the form of bread, must be given for its renewal, or it will surely die. Two things we MUST have, and have them continually—bread and water—else we cannot live.

But if this physical bread be of such tremendous importance to our bodily well-being, of how much greater importance is the Bread of life to our

spiritual existence. We said that without bread we could not live. We spoke from the standpoint of common possibility. We said man lives by bread. It was but a fraction of the truth ; for " man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God " (Matt. iv. 4) ; and doubtless that word, if He so chose, would suffice for our physical life as well as for our spiritual without other sustenance, so that even bread *might* be dispensed with at His will. Not so with " the true Bread " " which cometh down from heaven." Without that our spirits *cannot* live. That Bread we must have ; on that we must feed, or we perish. " Except ye eat of the flesh of the Son of Man . . . ye have no life in you " (John vi. 53). If, then, it behoves us to ask for the bread which perishes—if we are taught to seek for its bestowal with unceasing daily prayer—how much more does it behove us to seek for the truer Bread of life, to pray for its bestowal with even greater earnestness and more unceasing supplication. If we have been remiss in this matter ; if we have fallen into the common temptation that " doth so easily beset " mankind, and have lost sight of the relative and supreme importance of the spiritual, as compared with the temporal, food ; if, when we have uttered the petition our Saviour taught us, " Give us this day our daily bread," we have forgotten that it was intended doubtless to include the spiritual as well as the bodily necessities—let us reconsider our position here, as the earthly bread, meet type of the heavenly, is broken before our eyes and given to us as a symbol of that flesh which " is meat indeed," and

which is to preserve our bodies and souls unto eternal life.

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“ I AM the Bread of life.” We must never lose sight of those words of the Master ; we must strive never to forget their import or their importance. He does not say, be it noted, “ I am *like* the bread of life.” He does not say that bread is in some aspects a type of Himself, and of His relation to the believer’s life. He says, “ I AM Bread.” “ My Father giveth you the true Bread . . . the Bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven. . . . I am the Bread ” (John vi. 32-34). So, then, some of us have been mistaken for years. We thought our daily bread was the true bread, and that He was only Bread in a sense—*i.e.*, that He was like bread in some respects. Now we have learned that the bread which we press with our teeth is but a shadow (as all earthly things are), a symbol of the true Bread, and that that true Bread is our Lord Himself. If, then, bread be life, and if He be that bread, it comes to this : that He is our life ; that to live we must feed, not upon a Sacrament, or a doctrine, or a truth alone, but literally upon Him. Life, then—spiritual life—is not creed, or profession, or orthodoxy, or ceremonial observance, nor even outward conformity to law. True spiritual life is eating bread and feeding thereon ; it is the inward assimilation of the Christ ; it is Christ in me which is the hope of glory ; it is Christ who is not only the resurrection, but the life. Men forget this truth, and try to live upon “ means and ministries of grace.” As well might they strive to eat the

Paten, or to feed in daily life upon the dish-covers and the dishes, instead of their contents. Life is not something which is given to us by Christ apart from His Presence ; life is Christ Himself. He does not say He is giver of resurrection and of life ; He says . “ I AM the resurrection and the life.”

Of that life our daily bread, and in a special sense the bread at Holy Communion, is a type and symbol. We have not forgotten, of course, that the sacramental bread is the emblem of death. We have not forgotten that it typifies to us the broken body of our Lord, and that we receive it as a symbol and a Sacrament of the grace of forgiveness. But we must not stop there ; we must not limit the Feast of Remembrance to a recollection of Calvary. There was a natural body of our Lord, and it was offered as a sacrifice for us. But there *is* a glorified body ; and though we cannot actually partake of that body any more than we can actually partake of the natural body—yet we do partake of its life, and by partaking of that life—of Him who is that life—we live. We are saved from the guilt and consequences of sin by virtue of a dead Christ. But we must “ lift up our hearts ” from the Cross and from the grave to the skies ; for He is dead no longer. He lives ; and it is because He lives that we “ shall live also.” He died to be our Redeemer ; He lives to be our life ; and that life is typified to us by the consecrated bread. Profound and mysterious as this truth is, how it simplifies spiritual life for us ! How it eases our shoulders of the burden of self-effort ! How completely it answers the questionings of our hearts as to the nature and the possi-

bility for us of spiritual existence ! Henceforth we perceive that we have not to toil and to strive in order that we may live ; that life is not to be a production, but a reception ; that it is not we that live at all, but Christ that liveth in us ; that what we have to do is to take care that we feed upon Him, assured that in so doing we shall receive and maintain that eternal life which is the outcome of unison with the risen Son of Man. We do not pray, then, as we take the consecrated bread into our hands, " Give us, O Lord, some good gift from Thy hand ; some grace, some strength, some gift of life, of love." We pray, " Give us, O Lord, Thyself ; come Thou and dwell within our hearts ; come Thou and be our resurrection and our life." This is our prayer ; this is our hope. Nay, that He will and does fulfil the petition is our sure and steadfast faith ; else have we failed to learn the lesson of that bread which, with priestly prayer, is put into our hands.

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This life, typified by the bread, has its inward and its outward manifestation. And, be it remembered, those manifestations are to cover the whole field of both spiritual and natural existence. For the Christian life—the life of Christ in us, that is—is not to be confined to some obscure and relatively small part of our being which we call our souls ; it is to dominate and to leaven our whole being, and all the manifold expressions of that being. There is to be the inner life of devotion, the absolute and unquestioning surrender to the Divine will and purposes. There must be the life lived in " the secret place of the Most High " ; the life of which

our fellows know nothing ; the life of private communion with and lowly waiting upon God, which is hidden from mortal eyes. There is to be the life of outward worship, the daily offering of sacrifice and praise, the visible submission to the Divine will, the constant and unhesitating obedience to the Divine commands. There is to be the life of service ; of daily work for the Master, not merely in things which are commonly designated “ religious work,” but the doing of *all* things for His sake and in His name. There is to be the life of consecration that recognizes its stewardship—stewardship of existence itself and stewardship of all that existence contains and affords. There is to be the life of apostleship ; we are to go out to be witnesses for Him, at home or abroad—here, there, anywhere—wheresoever our lot may be cast, wheresoever our daily duty calls. To sustain such a manifold life as this—to maintain its consecration and its vigour, to perform its many-sided duties and activities—we shall require a never-failing supply of Bread. Whence are the strength, the wisdom, the constancy, the fidelity, the patience, for all these things to proceed but from the abundance of a spiritual life that finds its sustenance in a never-ending and plentiful supply of daily spiritual Bread ? Devotion, worship, service, consecration, stewardship, apostleship—“ who is sufficient for these things ?” Assuredly not we. Their claims are so tremendous, so continuous, so manifold, so overwhelming ! The responsibilities are so overpowering ; the risks of failures are so many, its consequences so appalling ! The flesh is so weak, the spirit so frail and trembling ! No ; truly we are

not sufficient for these things. We shall need strength, the strength that comes from the reception of the Bread of life.

This being so, do not let us forget that we pray for *daily* bread. There are many who seem to imagine that they need eat but once. They realize that their spiritual life came from a reception of Christ at its commencement, but they act as if that life, once given, were self-sustaining, and could be lived apart from its Author and its Source. This is a grievous and fatal mistake. We need—nay, we must have—the abiding Presence of Christ in the heart if we are to continue to live. We must feed upon Him not once, but always. There must be daily communion, daily reception, daily intercourse. The union between us and our Lord is to be a vital one, and must know no interval, or we shall surely droop and die. The manna of yesterday will not avail for the requirements of to-day. We cannot live upon an experience, however vivid and holy, however satisfying, it may have been at the time. New duties, new responsibilities, new perplexities, new difficulties, new temptations, will call for new strength to accomplish and to meet them; we must feed, and feed continually, upon Him who is our Daily Bread.

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By what means, then, are we to feed upon the Christ? How are we to assimilate Him who is our life? Not, surely, by any mere physical approximation of that natural bread which He ordained to be a symbol of Himself. For though that bread speaks to us of Him and of His body—first broken for us and then glorified for our sakes—though the Sacred

Emblem so speaks to us, yet we cannot believe that He is in the bread itself, nor can we believe that all who receive it receive also the glorious Mystery which it is intended to signify. Else would every communicant be a true partaker of his Lord ; else also would he who might unhappily be debarred from Holy Communion be for ever cut off from such participation. That Christ comes to the worthy receiver *with* the bread—that in his case the participation of the one and of the other are simultaneous—we cannot doubt ; but that Christ comes *in* the bread we are not able to believe. No ; the means by which we eat of the true Bread of life is faith ; it is a spiritual, not a carnal eating. And we may be thankful that it is so ; for we need that celestial food, not only every day, but every hour of the day, and we cannot always be at the Table of our Lord ; the consecrated bread is not always within our reach. We eat it here, and, eating it with faith, we truly feed upon Him who is our life ; but by faith we can, and must, feed upon Him where the Holy Bread is not—in our homes, in the street, in the office, and the workshop, and the field.

It is very significant, in this connection, to notice that we pray twice for daily bread while we are at the Sacramental Feast. We ask for it—or the priest asks for it in our name—at the very beginning of the service.¹ We ask for it again immediately after

¹ This first Lord's Prayer originally " formed part of the Priest's private preparation for the Office, and was repeated ' secretly ' before he went up to the altar " (Evan Daniel). Now, however, it is part of the public service, and the fact that the people do not say it is due probably rather to custom and habit than to instruction or design.

our reception of the Elements. Its use on the first occasion is natural enough, and easy to understand. But why ask for that which we have just received (for surely the meaning of the request in both cases is spiritual as well as temporal) ? Whether it was so intended by those who framed our Liturgy or not we are inevitably reminded by the second occurrence of the prayer that we shall need, and do need, that Bread as truly and as much after as before Communion. We could not live a week upon the Sabbath's grace—nay, we could not live a day upon the early morning's spiritual repast. We shall need the Bread all the day long, and at the very moment of its reception we pray for its renewed and continual bestowment. Nor need we fear that the petition will go unanswered. Our "bread shall be given us"; not "the bread that perisheth" alone, but "the true Bread that came down from heaven"; not only upon holy days and in the Holy Place, but at all times and in all places, it shall be given us whensoever we stretch out the hand of faith that we may take it, and eat, and live.

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The Bread so given, whether in the Sacrament or apart from it—that Bread which is none other than the Christ Himself—is, as we have already seen, our life; but it, or rather He, is more than life to us. He is our strength—strength for devotion, strength for worship, strength for service, strength for consecration, strength for stewardship, strength for apostleship. Do not let us doubt the truth that He is the strength for all these things to us. Do not let us doubt, as we kneel here and receive

the consecrated bread into our hands, either that He truly gives Himself to us, or that, so giving, He enables us to go out, "in the power of His great might," to be and to do all that He would have us do and be. "Let not your heart be troubled," He says; "ye believe in God—believe also in Me. . . . He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do" (John xiv. 1, 12). "Let not your heart be troubled!" But how often and how sorely they are troubled as we contemplate on the one hand our responsibilities, and on the other our weakness. Let them be so troubled no more, for such trouble is due to unbelief, and is therefore sin. Let us put away at once our doubts and our fears. As we "draw nigh and take the body of our Lord," let us accept the glorious truth that He gives Himself to us; to dwell henceforth in us, to fill us with His life, with His grace ("grace to help," be it noted, "in *every* time of need"), with His strength; that He comes to work in us "to will and to do of His good pleasure"; that what we need henceforth is simply to abandon ourselves to the operation of the indwelling Christ, to be passive in His hands, that He may do in us, through us, with us, what He will. So let us feed, by faith, upon the Bread of life; and so feeding, and so believing, let us go forth to our daily duties—to the labours, the cares, the joys, the temptations, the responsibilities, the witness-bearing; calm, steadfast, fearless, strong; knowing Whom we have believed, and assured that He Whom we so know will "evermore give us that Bread," and ever prove Himself to be to us El-Shaddai—the All-Sufficient God.

X

The Chalice

“ I WILL take,” says the Psalmist, “ the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD.” Some have seen in this declaration a conscious prophecy of the Chalice at Holy Communion. To us this seems unlikely, if not impossible. Nor do we feel sure that there is any intended reference in it to that Holy Sacrament at all. The cup referred to may have been that which formed part of the Passover feast—which probably did prefigure, in some measure, the Christian Cup—or it may not have been. Of this alone we can be sure—namely, that we do partake of a “ cup of salvation ” as we drink the wine which is the emblem of the blood of Christ.

There is perhaps more mystery in the Cup than in the Paten ; the separate teaching of the wine may be more difficult rightly to interpret than that of the bread ; but it will help us, we think, if we remember that the Cup, or rather its contents, will bear a twofold significance.

It is first of all, of course, emblematic of that precious blood which was shed for us upon Calvary’s cross. In this respect it is indeed “ the cup of

salvation," for by that blood we are saved from the guilt and consequence of sin. It was this to which all the sacrifices of the Mosaic Law pointed ; it was this which the blood of the victim, shed round about the altar in the old Tabernacle, foreshadowed ; it was this salvation from death by the substitution of another that the ritual of the Burnt-Offering and of the Sin-Offering taught. It is through the blood that we obtain " forgiveness, even the remission of sins " ; it is by this blood that we find acceptance in the sight of God ; it is by the virtue of this blood that we are enabled to enter the holy place and hold communion with the Father of our spirits.

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But it is not in this aspect that we desire to regard the contents of the chalice at the moment. There must be another view of it possible to the eye of faith. The wine which it contains must have another significance ; it must speak to us not only of death, but of life. " The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto eternal life." The words cannot be literally understood. The actual blood of Christ which was shed for us *did* procure our pardon, in that the shedding of it was the payment of the penalty of death in our stead and on our behalf, but it is shed, and therefore irrecoverable ; and if it were not, the shedding of human blood can in no case and in no sense convey or sustain everlasting life. The wine, therefore, must have its purely spiritual import. The blood which saved us from the penalty of sin was the actual blood of Jesus of Nazareth, but the blood which is to preserve our

bodies and souls unto eternal life must be a synonym for the life of our risen and ascended Lord. When we speak of blood in this connection, it is true, indeed, that "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." It is not the blood which preserves us unto life so much as that life of which the blood is the common Bible emblem.¹

It is true, of course, that it is only through the virtue of the actual blood of Christ that there comes to us the possibility of participation in His life, and in that secondary sense the blood may be said to preserve us unto eternal life. But we shall not go far astray, as it seems to us, if we alter the Prayer-Book phraseology thus: "The life of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto eternal life." We have no desire to be fanciful in our interpretation, but shall we be altogether wrong if we think of the bread as typifying the life of the body—that is, the physical life of the believer, the Christian life manifested in action—and of the wine as typifying the hidden and more ethereal life of the spirit?

If we accept this as a working hypothesis, we shall see in Holy Communion the pledge of a double provision, answering to the dual nature and need of the regenerated man. For, as we have seen, the outward life of religion is but the manifestation of an inward relationship to, and unity with, the Divine. We live the manifested life of godliness (*i.e.*, God-

¹ We need hardly remind our readers that the Prayer-Book is not inspired in the same sense that the Bible is inspired, and that, therefore, rigid and literal interpretation, or acceptation, of the words is not so imperatively called for in the one case as in the other.

likeness) before the world because, and only as, we live a secret life of vital union and communion with Him who is our life. This inner life is sustained by the presence of the "Spirit of Christ," without which we are "none of His."

There are many people who overlook the importance of this secret relationship to the Divine. Their conception of Christianity is confined to the outward aspects of religion; and though, doubtless, in many cases such persons are truly alive, their life is poor, sickly, feeble; their faith is frail, their power is small, and they are in constant danger of apostasy and death. Let the Chalice remind us, then, that there is a more vital union necessary between Christ and His people; that there is a secret life to be lived—a life that is purely spiritual, a life that may grow, and should grow, in intensity as we become partakers in fuller and yet fuller measure of the resurrection life, of which, surely, the wine in that Chalice is the type.

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But, further, this "blood of our Lord Jesus Christ," be it the actual blood shed upon Calvary, or the life of which blood is the constant emblem, is not only life-giving; it is also cleansing. "He washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes," says Jacob of Judah, as he gives his final blessing to his sons (Gen. xlix. 11). As a commentary on that declaration we may read the announcement of Shiloh—the Lion of the Tribe of Judah—in answer to the question: "Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat?" He answers:

"I have trodden the winepress alone . . . ; their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment."¹ This passage, while it does not bear directly upon our present meditation, appears to prove clearly that the prophecy of Jacob referred to Christ, and also that the wine referred to was symbolic of blood or life. Here again there is a double sense in which the wine is typical of the cleansing blood of our Lord. It symbolizes first of all the actual blood, by the shedding of which we are cleansed from the guilt, and so absolved from the penalty, of sin. But it also typifies that risen life of Christ by which we are to be cleansed from the presence and power of sin itself. The one, be it remembered, is not included in the other. The sacrifice of the Lamb of God delivered us, once for all, from the guilt and the penalty, but the blood shed did not deliver us from the presence and power of sin. Nor could it. For it was the sign and consequence of death, and death cannot conquer the forces of death; such conquest needs life. Hence the wine, as we understand it, reminds us also of life (typified by blood)—that life of our risen Head by which we are to be delivered not only from the legal consequences, but from the stain and from the dominion of our sin.

There seems to be some such double meaning in the declaration of the Apostle : "The blood of Jesus Christ (God's Son) cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John i. 7). For the tense is present : "The blood . . . is cleansing." But the blood shed upon Calvary cannot be said to be perpetually cleansing

¹ Isa. lxiii., 2. 3.

the same sinner. It is a confusion of thought—perhaps a harmless confusion, but a confusion none the less—to pray, as people often do, that the precious blood may be sprinkled afresh upon their hearts. If they have not become actual and wilful backsliders, such fresh sprinkling is unnecessary. The “one oblation, once offered,” being once applied to a given soul, that soul is completely absolved, as by a single act, from the legal guilt and consequences of all its transgressions, past, present, and to come. The shed blood, therefore, can only be said to be cleansing us from guilt in the sense that it has so cleansed, and that the effect of that cleansing abides.

But if the word “blood,” as used by S. John, includes, as we strongly suspect it does, not only the actual blood of Jesus of Nazareth, but also the life of our risen Lord, then the literal truth of the passage and the justification for the use of the present tense, is complete. For that life is, at this and every moment, in the act of cleansing us from all sin.

Let us not be misunderstood. We would not for an instant deny that S. John refers to the blood shed upon the Cross; we would not deny—how could we?—that the cleansing from the guilt of sin is a perfected, and therefore in its effects a present, work; but we desire our readers to see that there is a deeper meaning in the passage than that. We would remind them that there is a progressive and ever-progressing work of cleansing being wrought in us, not by the death of Christ, but by His life, which, according to the common imagery of the Bible, may very well be set forth under the term of “blood,” and may therefore be

included in the symbolism of the wine which is offered to us at the Holy Feast.

It is for this second cleansing from sin—*i.e.*, from its defilement and its presence—that we who gather at the Holy Table should ardently long and earnestly pray. It is not enough that we are delivered from the fear of eternal death as the consequence of sin ; the heart does not understand the genius of Christianity which rests satisfied with aught less than the perfect cleansing of the nature from the thing which is an abomination in the sight of God. We who gather here in the manifested presence of our Father and our Lord must surely have higher and nobler aims than such a heart can feel. We cannot but long that the perfect likeness and the perfect purity of the Divine may become ours.

Let us notice, then, that this cleansing comes on the spiritual, not the physical side. The body of our Lord, typified by the bread, confers the grace and strength which is needed for the outward and active manifestation of our Christian life ; the life of our Lord, typified by the wine, is the means of cleansing. We are thus reminded of that which we surely know already—that the victory over sin is a matter, not of the flesh, but of the spirit ; that “ the weapons of our warfare ” in this respect also “ are not carnal ” ; that no outward amendment or active pursuit of righteousness will avail us here ; that what we need is an inward and spiritual renewal, to be “ strengthened with might in the inward man,” to be made clean by the infusion of a vitality that shall expel the virus of the deadly malady of wickedness.

This vitality is at the disposal of all into whose hand the sacred Chalice is placed. Nay, that Chalice and its contents are but "the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace," and that grace is given to all who are willing to partake of the mystic blood of Christ, with or without the Chalice, both here and wheresoever else the need is felt and the requisite faith is exercised. Nor must we forget that the supply of that vitality is unlimited. There is no poverty and no failure on the part of God. That we fail, and fail often and lamentably, is, alas ! too true ; but such failure must be laid at our own door, and not at that of the Divine. We need not fail—we ought not to fail ; there is " grace to help in every time of need," but we do not seek that grace, or we do not believe that it is given ; and so, either through carelessness or unbelief, we live lives of failure which are a burden to ourselves, a source of stumbling to our neighbours, and a reproach to our Father and our Friend.

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But there is perhaps yet another symbolism hidden in the Cup. We are told by the inspired writer that it is " wine that maketh glad the heart of man," and we may well regard the wine before us as an emblem of the joy of Christian living. There are people, even amongst professing Christians, who dispute the existence of this joy. " You must admit," said such a one to the author on one occasion—" you must admit that religion is a very gloomy thing." Quite necessary, essentially proper, absolutely indispensable, but "*very gloomy*"—such was her estimate of Christianity. One could only

tell such a person, with a smile, that she did not really understand what true religion was ; but the question arose in one's mind as to how far we, who ought to know, and who theoretically at least do know, are to blame for such an attitude as that on the part of others who do not. We have learned that it is "the joy of the Lord" which is our strength. Has He not spoken to us that our joy might be full? Have we not been commanded by Him to "rejoice evermore"? And does He not with every command give the strength for its fulfilment? All these things we know; but have we realized that we must take the power to rejoice, just as we take the power to conquer or to labour, and that we must take it from the same source? Joy is a plant that, like every other plant, needs suitable nourishment to enable it to flourish. It is not to be produced by a mere effort of the will, nor is it wholly dependent upon environment. It is not *our* joy, but "*the joy of the Lord*"; it is not joy in ourselves, or in our circumstances, or even in our religion; it is joy in *Him*—we are to "rejoice in the Lord evermore"—and just because it is a Divine joy, it is of necessity a Divine gift. There is therefore nothing anomalous in taking the wine, which is the symbol of blood (which in its turn is an emblem of life)—we say there can be nothing amiss in taking that wine as a symbol of the Divine guerdon of celestial joy. For joy is at once the accompaniment and the product of healthy and abundant life. It is so in that lower form of gladness which we may call purely physical and mental joy. The dyspeptic, the pain-wracked, the man whose

heart palpitates or whose breath labours, or who is the victim of constitutional and perpetual weakness, is seldom full of joy. It is when the pulse is strong, and the sight is clear, and the nerves evenly strung, and the whole physical machinery vigorous and elastic, that the natural man finds keen pleasure in life. Nor is it otherwise with the rejoicing which is purely spiritual; the Christian life will not be a gladsome one unless the vitality is abundant; the feeble believer will be a long-faced believer; the man who has drunk but little of the wine of the Divine life will be the man who finds his religion a burden rather than a joy. To be able to leap forth to do the will of God; to be able to say, "Yea, I delight to do it"; to go singing songs of praise and thanksgiving along life's pathway, making melody in the ears of all men—we shall need to drink deeply by faith of that draught of eternal life which is offered to us by Christ, and prefigured before us in this holy Cup.

These are truths upon which we ought to meditate seriously, not only for our own sakes, but for the sake of others less well instructed than ourselves in the things that concern our holy religion. For unless we do, we are in danger of misrepresenting Christianity, and of giving men an excuse for believing it to be a "very gloomy" thing. How, not knowing better by experience, can they imagine it to be otherwise if they see us with unvarying long faces; if we always appear to be weary, doleful, despairing; if our resignation to the Divine will always finds expression in a sigh; if our Christian service is evidently rather a matter of duty than of

delight ? The sour or saddened face will give the lie, in their estimation, to all the declarations which our lips may make of the peace and blessedness which is the portion of the believer. Our discontent will effectually contradict our protestations of sonship and of safety, and we shall repel men from Christ by our moods while we seek to attract them by our words. Hence it behoves us, lest we do serious and irreparable damage alike to our brethren and to our Master's cause, to seek for the spirit of true rejoicing, in order that it may manifest itself to all with whom we come in contact, that they may seek to know the secret of our happy lives, and be stimulated to find the source of that joy which, as they discover, the world can neither give nor take away.

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Let us, then, draw near and drink, nothing doubting. And as we drink, let us not only partake of the contents of the Chalice ; let us drink in with the lips of faith that celestial and Divine draught of spiritual life which our Lord pledges Himself to give to us as He says : " Drink ye all of this . . . My blood is drink indeed . . . he that drinketh My blood dwelleth in Me, and I in him."

XI

Benediction

“**T**HE peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord ; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you, and remain with you always.”

Such is the final benediction, with the sound of which in our ears we are presently to go out from the Holy Place to resume the duties, and to meet the temptations, of our everyday life. There is a depth and a breadth in it which we shall be unable to measure or to fathom, but we may profitably meditate for a while upon some of its most easily distinguished features and its most readily apprehended truths.

It divides itself into two well-defined parts. There is first of all to be **PEACE**. As we have already seen, Holy Communion is the antitype of the Peace-Offering of old. It is at once the sign and the consummation of peace. The peace to which it points, and which it is intended to bestow upon the worthy receiver, although not expressly so stated in the Benediction before us, is of a twofold character.

There is first of all to be peace *with* God. Holy Communion is the sign and seal of the Atonement—the “at-one-ment,” that is, in this case—between the pardoned sinner and his Lord. We “do show forth the Lord’s death,” and that death has destroyed for us the estrangement that sin had created between ourselves and the Father of our spirits. There is a very true sense in which this is the “peace of God,” for, after all, it is the free gift of the Divine; we have neither earned it, nor deserved it, nor purchased it. By that gift we are placed in a position of perfect rest as regards the past. All the sin of our life is under the blood. Henceforth the memory of our shortcomings is robbed of its greatest bitterness. We remember many of them, it is true, but we remember them only with penitential, not with guilty, shame. We think of them as reminders of our weakness, as beacons to warn us against future shipwreck, as monuments of the boundless and unfathomable mercy and long-suffering of our God; but they do not gall us with a sense of present pollution, and they cause us no anxiety as regards their consequences, either in this world or in the world to come. Moreover, this peace denotes and includes a reconciliation between our will and the will of the Divine; nay, more, it includes and springs from a personal reconciliation between the Divine Being and ourselves, a reconciliation of which true communion is at once the highest expression and the perfect consummation.

* * * * *

All this may be readily understood, at least by those who have experienced it, but when we come

to what is more emphatically the peace *of* God, we are in far deeper waters. For we shall miss the beauty and the strength of the benediction here if we understand it as though it meant "a peace *from* God." That it is God's own peace which we are to expect is clear from the declaration of the Master : " Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you " (John xiv. 27). It is, then, His own peace, and not another, which is to be our present heritage. The question first arises, and arises very naturally, How can He give us His peace ? I may give many things to my friend, but I cannot transfer to him my peace ; that is part of myself, and is incommunicable. That Christ may give the believer *a* peace we can very easily believe, but that He can give us *His* peace would seem impossible if His word had not been pledged to that effect. The difficulty disappears, however, when we remember His other promise : " I will not leave you orphans ; I will come unto you." It is true He left them a heritage of peace, but, as we know, they did not immediately enter into it ; He gave them His peace, but they did not receive it until He returned and, by the Holy Ghost, took up His abode in their hearts. So is it also in our case ; we receive His peace when we receive Himself. The two are inseparable : when He is present in the believer's heart, His peace is there also ; when He is absent, the peace experienced is of a lower order, and, because imperfect, is liable to be fitful and disturbed. We should learn, therefore, to pray rather for His presence than for His gifts : " O Lord, give me Thyself !" is a wiser and more effectual prayer than a mere petition for

peace. If we would have "the peace of God" to keep our hearts and minds as we go out into the world, we must see to it that we carry our Lord Himself with us upon the journey. This is beautifully set forth by the Apostle in his Epistle to the Philippians. "Be careful for nothing," he says. But why not? He has already told them: "The Lord is at hand" (Phil. iv. 5, 6). The statement does not refer, surely, to the Second Coming, or at least not to that alone; it means, we believe, an immediate Presence; and because of that Presence there is no need for anxiety or unrest. But if this be the effect of proximity, what will be the result of indwelling? Real unrest will then be not merely undesirable, or unnecessary, but impossible. The promise made by the Apostle in the next verse, "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall garrison (*φρουρήσει*) your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus," shall find its fulfilment in the experience of the indwelt.

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And the resultant peace, like the power of the garrisoning force, shall be perfect. Every foe of peace shall be driven out of the citadel, and shall be kept out; driven forth by the expulsive force of the incoming tenant, and unable to re-enter because the new Garrison occupies the whole space and fills every corner of the believing heart.

The peace, we said, shall be perfect. There shall be peace, as we have already seen, as regards the past, and in respect to the future on the other side the tomb. But there shall be far more than that:

there shall be peace as regards the present, and as regards the future of the life on earth.

“ Not a surge of worry,
Not a shade of care,
Not a blast of hurry,”

will disturb the inner calm of that heart which is garrisoned by the Presence, and therefore the peace, of the indwelling Christ. There will be calm amid all the tumult and the outward strife of the present ; there will be a perfect assurance in view of all the problems and all the threatenings of the future. “ I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able,” will be the all-sufficient answer to every suggestion of present despair or of future disaster. “ I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able—yea, and not only able, but willing—to meet my every necessity, to defend me in every danger, to guide me in every perplexity, to supply all my need. I have unbounded confidence in His goodness and His grace. Let whatever may arise, it can neither rob me of His presence nor shake my reliance on His power and willingness to bless. There may be difficulties in the present, there may be clouds of dark and threatening omen on the horizon of the future, but I know in whom I have believed, and these things neither dismay nor alarm me—

“ ‘ For while in Him confiding,
I cannot but rejoice.’ ”

* * * * *

There are many to whom such a state of repose will seem as a Utopian dream of the impossible.

“ Is it not,” they will ask—“ is it not contrary to all human experience ? Nay, more, is it not contrary to the express teaching of Scripture ? Do not the Lively Oracles themselves declare that ‘ man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward ’ ? Is not the Christian life a warfare ? Will there not always be circumstances, while we are upon earth, which will disturb and distress us ? ” It is in the last question that the fallacy of such reasoning is exposed. The peace of which we are speaking does not consist in the absence of disturbing forces, nor is it at all dependent upon circumstances. We remember reading somewhere the description of two pictures, painted by different artists, to denote their conception of peace. The one, as far as we can describe it, was a lake, lying calm and unruffled beneath the summer sunshine. Upon its surface there was not a ripple ; not a leaf moved upon the trees by its margin ; not a cloud cast its shadow from the sky ; not a sign of life was in sight. The whole scene conveyed to the eye a vision of dead, unbroken, unruffled calm. The other was a picture of a tumultuous waterfall. One saw the blinding spray ; one almost heard the thunder of the falling waters ; the sky was black with clouds ; the trees were bent and tossed by the tempest. And meanwhile, in a cleft of the rocks over which the cataract leaped, there sat a dove, secure and calm-eyed, upon the nest which she had built, safe in that cleft alike from the coming tempest and from the fury of the waters and the wind. The first picture was that of stagnation ; the latter was a portrayal of peace.

There are many people whose idea of peace is

practically that of stagnation ; they cannot imagine a condition of repose unless all the disturbing elements in life have been removed. In their estimation there is no peace unless there be surface calm as well as inward rest. Take such men to the side of the ocean when the tempest is blowing and the wild waves are tossing high, and they will laugh you to scorn if you speak of that ocean as an emblem of peace. And yet below the boiling surges there are depths of calm water, unruffled, peaceful, where the tempest never reaches, where no billow ever breaks. Such is that peace which fills the heart of the Christian after the personal advent of his Lord. There may be—nay, there will be—surface storms—days of outward strife, perhaps even hours of passing anxiety—but these will all be external, and will awake no echo and cause no ripple in the inner peace. “ Fightings without ” there may be, and often will be ; but there need be, there should be—and, if Christ dwells in us richly, there will be—no “ fears within.”

* * * * *

We say, “ If Christ dwell in us richly ” ; for just as this perfect peace is a matter of personal bestowal, so its realization comes to us as the result of personal trust in a living and present Lord. With all earth and hell leagued, as it sometimes seems, for his hindrance, annoyance, and destruction ; amid all the daily assaults of the world, the flesh, and the devil ; with innumerable perplexities and difficulties besetting him to-day ; with the future either utterly hidden from his view or lowering on the horizon with clouds of ominous gloom—

the Christian still stands undismayed within, and "though all without tumultuous seems," his heart is singing "the melody of peace." Why? Not because he is ignorant of his weakness; not because he relies upon his wisdom or his strength; not, certainly, because he feels a stoical indifference to his fate. No; he is at rest because he rests upon Another; he knows in whom he has believed (*i.e.*, he knows Him in whom he has believed). He not only knows Him, but he knows and feels Him to be nigh at hand; he relies upon His wisdom; he trusts His strength; he rests in His love; he leaves the problems to be solved, the enemies to be vanquished, the difficulties to be overcome, the necessities to be supplied, by Him. He has—he knows and feels he has—the presence of the indwelling Christ, and because he has that presence he is satisfied and safe.

* * * * *

But let us notice, further, that this peace is to have not only a passive, but also an active influence upon the believer's life. "The peace of God . . . keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God." We are to know God and to love God. Indeed, the two are mutually dependent and inclusive: to know God we must love Him; knowing Him, we cannot fail to love Him; and those conditions are to be preserved by a state of peace.¹

¹ No man can love God who does not know Him; true love comes in this case, as always, from knowledge. At the same time no man can hope to know *very much* of God until he has learned to love Him. Thus the knowledge and the love are mutually dependent, and tend in turn to promote one another.

Here, again, we are in the region of mutually dependent phenomena. We can only have true peace when we have learned to know, and therefore to love, God ; at the same time, we shall never know God in any very intimate sense until we have a heart at rest from all the strife due to anxiety and sin. It is when we walk with God, as it were, in the cool of the day, alone with Him in the garden of lilies and pomegranates which His own right hand hath planted for our sustenance and our delight ; it is when we talk with Him there, face to face, in that sweet and holy communion which the worldling knows not—it is then, amid the hush of perfect peace, far from the din, and the strife, and the foes, and the fears, and the clouds of the outer life, that we learn to know more of Him and of His love. Such knowledge as we gain in those peaceful hours would never come to us on the battlefield ; we should never learn it from books, not even from the Book itself. There could be no revelation of it to a heart full of forebodings, or to a life spent in fevered and fussy anxieties. We should never learn to know God, in any deep significance of the term, if there were not the secret place in the inner consciousness where JEHOVAH-SHALOM, the Lord of Peace sets us free from the strife of our earth-life that we may be at leisure of heart and mind to know Him better, and yet better, as the days go by.

And from such knowledge there grows love ; for to know God is to love Him. Men do not love because they ought, but because they must ; not because they have been commanded, though they may admit the justice and urgency of the com-

mand, but because they are drawn to the object of their affection by a force that is irresistible. Men do not truly love upon hearsay, nor merely at sight, but upon acquaintance ; they fall under the spell of the supremely lovable, and must needs, whether they will or no, surrender their hearts to that spell. Hence to be at peace, to have the leisure and the self-detachment which will enable us to learn to know God, is the surest guardianship for our love ; while at the same time it is only upon love and knowledge that the deepest and fullest and most abiding peace can be built.

* * * * *

We shall do well to ask ourselves, Have we this peace ? Do we understand the secret of its possession and its maintenance ? It ought to be ours. It is the promised gift of Christ to all His disciples, and we are especially entitled to it at the present moment. We have been commemorating the death by which the right to peace was bought for us ; we have offered ourselves, bodies and souls, as living sacrifices to God ; we have drawn near and held sweet and holy communion with Him ; therefore, as the words of the final blessing fall upon our ears, we feel that the priest is but invoking upon our heads and our hearts that to which, in some sense at least, we are lawful heirs. How, then, shall we enter into our inheritance ? How preserve it when obtained ? Let us remind ourselves of what we said just now : having Christ, we have the peace ; lacking Him, nothing will bestow or enable us to retain it. So let us look away from all *things*—from all outward constituents of human happiness,

from all external "means and ministries of grace," from all self-effort after satisfaction. Nay, let us cease to rely upon the bestowal of Divine gifts; let us seek His abiding presence who is not only our resurrection and our life, but also Himself our peace.¹ Let us go hence believing that He has given Himself not only *for* us, but *to* us. Let us accept His gracious promise, "If any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him" (Rev. iii. 20). Let us see to it that we lose not that holy companionship, once established, and we shall have His peace because we have Himself, and that peace shall garrison our hearts and minds, and keep us in the knowledge and the love of God.

¹ "This Man shall be the peace" (Micah v. 5).

XII

Benediction (*continued*)

BENEDICTION in this case, however, includes not only peace but also blessing—that is to say, there is not merely to be a condition of passive contentment ; there is also to be actual possession and positive enjoyment : we are not merely to be at rest, we are to be wealthy. Let us notice, first of all in this connection, that the blessing is to be that of God *Almighty*. The personal character and the capabilities of the Being upon whom we are to depend for blessedness are matters of the highest moment. That in this case it is God (*i.e.*, the Good One) to whom our eyes are to be directed, assures us of His willingness to bless. But that which is, perhaps, more often a question of anxiety—namely, the extent to which He may be *able* to bless, is set at rest for ever to the believing mind by the reminder that He is Almighty. There can be no limits to the powers or to the resources of Omnipotence. There may be hindrances, it is true, but such hindrances are due to our own unbelief or disobedience ; let these be abandoned, and nothing can prevent the perfect happiness of him on whose behalf Omnipotence is engaged to bless. |It seems to us that we do

not consider this truth as often or as thoughtfully as we should. We do not realize as we might, or as we ought, the character of the God whom we worship and whom we profess to trust. He is "God Almighty!" Then all the forces of earth and hell are powerless for our destruction if He be our "Defender and our Shield." He is "God Almighty!" Then whatsoever is necessary to our happiness and our well-being is already in His possession, or can be created by His word. He is "God Almighty!" Then all the forces of the universe are bound to do His bidding and to serve, not only His might, but our convenience if He so command. Surely we should be less fearful if we were less faithless as regards this truth: did we realize more fully the character of our Benefactor we should have less anxiety as to the possibility of blessedness.

* * * * *

But let us pass on to note, further, that this is the blessing of the Triune God, and that each and all the Persons in the Blessed Trinity are to take part in the benefaction—"The blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be among you." There is to be, then, the threefold blessedness coming to us from Childhood, from Brotherhood, and from Inspiration.

But what, we ask, is the peculiar blessing of Childhood? For what, most of all and first of all, do we look from a father's hand? The answer, surely, is Provision. The very first office of the father is to provide. It is he who provides the life of the offspring, and, once they are born, it is he who is expected to provide for all their necessities.

It is so in the case we are now considering. Whether we think of ourselves as the natural or the spiritual children of the Most High, it is equally true that He is the Author of our life, and that He must be, as indeed He is, the Provider for our necessities. But consider ! We have here a most amazing and unique combination ; we have an Almighty Being who is also a Father—Love and Omnipotence in one ! What kind of provision, what wealth of blessing, may we not expect from such a source as that ? It will be neither the cold, calculating supply of mere officialism on the one hand, nor the feeble and circumscribed provision of well-intentioned but limited or semi-bankrupt possibility on the other. The love which prompts the providence will be unfathomable, the wealth and power at the disposal of the Provider will be boundless and inexhaustible. Hence it is impossible to imagine any need—for body, soul, or spirit ; for time, or for eternity—that will be overlooked or that will overtax the resources of the Almighty God who is also the Father of His people. Truly “ the lions do lack, and suffer hunger : but they who seek the Lord shall want no manner of thing that is good ” (Ps. xxxiv. 10, P.B.V.). Nor must we forget that wisdom as well as bounty is characteristic of the providence of such Fatherhood. There is alike the wisdom that foresees, that “ knoweth our necessities before we ask,” and also the wisdom that discriminates, that sees what would and what would not be beneficial in each individual case. We need not fear, therefore, that we shall lack any really necessary blessing simply because we have not been wise enough to ask for it ; nor need

we fear that our importunity will procure for us any gift which would be seriously prejudicial to our well-being ; so long, that is, in each case, as we are numbered among the true children of the Lord. It may perhaps be urged by some of our readers that protection is as much a characteristic of fatherhood as Provision. True ! but the provision of everything includes the provision of safety ; in other words, the less is included in the greater—the “ all things ” which are to be ours as the result of our relationship to the Divine, cover every conceivable need of the recipients, both as regards themselves and as regards their relationship to all the factors and forces of their existence upon earth. Freedom, perfect freedom, from all anxieties of every kind is the first form of the blessing of the Almighty and Triune God. Alas ! how little do we realize or experience this freedom ; to what a limited extent do we obey the command to take no anxious, rending thought for the morrow ; how imperfectly and how seldom we really trust the wisdom and the goodness and the power of our Father, who is in heaven ! How much we lose of peace ; how much we suffer of pain ; how we mar the quiet beauty of our spiritual life ; how we corrode and enfeeble our mental life ; how we wear, and perhaps shorten, our physical life, because we so often fail to grasp the truth that this provision of Divine fatherhood is ours, since we are Christ's !

* * * * *

But there is to be, in the second place, the blessedness that is attendant upon Brotherhood : we are to have the blessing of the Son as well as that of the Father. Now, if the blessing of childhood be par-

ticularly that of provision, Brotherhood will bring to us its special gift of Redemption. For our Elder Brother is, above and before all things else, our Redeemer. But it is a mistake to limit the work of redemption, as accomplished by Him, to the Cross, or even to that and the resurrection. The work of Redemption, begun at Calvary and attested by the empty tomb, is accomplished as regards its actual purposes and its completion, by the power of association. We are to be redeemed, not only from the condemnation and the consequences of our sin, but from the sin itself, and from all its present results. From everything in us which is the outcome of the fall; from all the moral weakness; from all the mental depravity; from all the spiritual blindness; from the power of evil habit and the allurements of evil desire; from the dumb devil that seals our tongues, making testimony impossible, and from the palsy that enfeebles our will and invalidates us for service; from the fever of the unholy temper, and from the deafness that hinders us from hearing the Divine voice; from the spirit of aggressive self-will on the one hand, and from the servile spirit of the slave on the other; from the wild alarms of untrusting fear, and from the wilder precipitancy of presumptuous folly; in a word, from everything within us and about us that bears testimony to our lost estate, it is the purpose of our Brother to redeem. How, then, is that redemption to be accomplished? Principally by the power of association; by the influence of a brotherhood that shall exist, not in name alone, but as a close and tender tie. By a companionship which shall know no interval; by

a mutual relationship so close that it shall invite our completest confidence, shall win our unbounded affection, shall stimulate us to perpetual imitation, and shall give us at once a new centre and a new motive to our life. Nothing else would ever save man from himself and from his sin. No system of ethics, no legal enactment, no theological or doctrinal dogma, no stimulus of a dead example, no ecclesiastical association, would be sufficiently powerful to overcome the momentum of inherent and habitual evil, or to infuse new life into the inertia of a heart dead in trespasses and sins : if a man is to be saved at all he must be saved by the guardianship, the example, and the living power—the warm vitality—of an ever-present companionship ; and that the companionship, not of a Deity who is above and beyond his reach, but of a Brother Man, who touches him at every point and along every line of his life, but who is yet more than man ; and who can afford, therefore, not only the stimulus of example, but also the power to imitate and to conquer. Such companionship, such stimulus, such power, come to us through the Brotherhood of the Divine Son, and forms the second phase of the benediction—the blessedness—pronounced upon us in the name of the Triune God.

■ * ■ * *

But, further, there is to be the blessedness that comes of inspiration : the peculiar blessing of God the Holy Ghost. What, once more, are the special features of that blessedness ? May they not all be summed up in the one word, " Grace " ? Wisdom that shall inform our ignorance and restrain our

folly ; guidance that shall direct alike our hearts and our feet into the way of peace ; power that shall strengthen us to be "more than conquerors ;" patience that shall enable, both to wait and to endure ; an inner vision which shall reveal to us the hidden things of God ; faith that shall remain unshaken and undismayed amid all the onslaughts of the combined forces of the World and of the Pit ; energy to engage without weariness in the active service of the Lord ; courage that shall not be ashamed to bear testimony to the goodness and the claims of the Master ; in a word, all that is needed for the perfect inward existence, and for the perfect outward expression, of our Christian life—these come to us through the in-breathing of the Holy Ghost, and go to make up the peculiar blessedness which is ours through the presence and the goodwill of the Third Person in the Blessed Trinity.

* * * * *

"The blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." Who can begin to appraise the superabundant wealth that is set forth in those pregnant syllables ? The human mind faints and fails as it strives to measure the height and the depth of the glory which they place at the disposal of our race ; and mortal speech is powerless to utter more than a fraction of the little which our dim eyes *can* discern of that glory. We do not feel even disposed to attempt its utterance ; a position of hushed and rapt amaze appears most fitting—an adoration of silent and grateful love. The only fear is lest any among us should fail to catch the vision ; lest our very familiarity with the words

should cause us to miss their tremendous import. Let us pause for a moment, here and now, ere the words be uttered, and strive to realize something of their true significance, that when they shall fall upon our ears we may be prepared to accept them in the spirit as well as in the letter, and to enter by faith into some at least of the rich inheritance of blessedness which the priestly lips seal to us in their utterance: "The blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you and remain with you always." All the power and all the goodness of Omnipotence—the Fatherhood, and the Brotherhood, and the Inspiration of the All-sufficient God; the provision, and the redemption, and the grace—to be ours, not merely as an inheritance laid up for our enjoyment somewhere and somewhen in the dim and distant future, but a blessing, a heritage of wealth, into which we are to enter and which we are to enjoy here and now. And not only now, but always. We are not to taste its sweetness for a brief moment, as we turn our backs upon the Holy Table, and then to lose it almost ere we pass the portal of the Sanctuary; it is to "remain with us always." We are to take it with us as our inalienable possession; we are to carry it out into the world; it is to be with us amid all the toils and all the temptations of to-morrow and of all the to-morrows.

"It," did we say? Nay, we must not allow ourselves to be so deceived. The blessing is not "it"—it is "HE." It is not something, nor any wealth of "things," which we are to take out with us: this blessing is God Himself. It is not merely Fatherhood, but the Father; not Brotherhood alone, but

the Brother ; not Inspiration only, but the Inspirer ; not all the wealth which the Trinity is able to bestow, but the abiding presence of that Trinity Itself, in all Its fulness and in all Its power.

This is the crown and the consummation of Holy Communion. All the commemoration and the fellowship, all the confession and the self-sacrifice, all the praise and the worship, lead up to and find their flower and their fruitage in that blessedness which is none other than the abiding presence of our God. We came, bankrupts as we were in ourselves—we came to the Feast of Love for this very purpose, that we might be enriched with all the fulness of God.

“ Lord ! we wait for this
In hush of watching love ;
Wait in Thy temple ; wait to prove the bliss
All bliss above.”

Do not let us miss the joy and the blessing, we beseech Thee, O Lord. Do not let us depart without that Benediction which is the beauty and the crown of all our service and of all our intercourse. We have sought and found Thee at Thy Holy Table, we have partaken of the Food Divine which Thou hast provided for our sustenance, we have presented ourselves to Thee as living and holy sacrifices, and now we are about to depart ; but first—

“ We stand to bless Thee ere our worship cease ;
Then, lowly kneeling, wait Thy word of peace.”

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